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Lee Pendergrass
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Fort Hays State University

Ethnic Heritage Studies

Memoirs of Pioneers of Cheyenne County, Kansas: Ole Robert Cram, Georg Isernhagen, Nancy Moore Wieck

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MAY 1980 *NO. 4*

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No. 4 *Memoirs Of Pioneers Of Cheyenne County, Kansas: Ole Robert Cram, Georg Isernhagen, Nancy Moore Wieck*, edited by Lee F. Pendergrass

Memoirs Of Pioneers Of Cheyenne County, Kansas: Ole Robert Cram, Georg Isernhagen, Nancy Moore Wieck

Edited by Dr. Lee F. Pendergrass,
Fort Hays State University and the Kansas Committee for the Humanities

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the moral, political, and financial support of the citizens of Cheyenne County this issue could not have appeared. Those who have been particularly helpful include the Robert Cram family; Lydia Landenberger, daughter of Georg Isernhagen; Dorothy Mast of Bird City; Dr. Lucille Stephenson; Mr. and Mrs. Warren Northrup; John and Elaine Kite; the Cheyenne County State Bank; and the Cheyenne County Historical Society.

Excerpts of the Isernhagen account have been reprinted with permission from the Heritage Review, Volume 21 (1978), 24-28 published by the Germans from Russia Heritage Society in Bismarck, North Dakota.

This volume represents a significant forward stride in local history. The residents of the county provided the funding for printing and willingly gave the History Department at Fort Hays State University control of editorial and interpretative decisions. Hopefully, their courage will inspire others to act similarly. The major thrust of the editing has been to eliminate redundancies, digressions, and convoluted statements while preserving the flavor and character of each author's style of writing by retaining original spelling, colloquialisms, and tenses in spite of shifts and lack of agreement. Occasionally punctuation changes had to be made and paragraphs created where there were none in order to promote clarity as well as content. The use of the ungainly "sic" and parentheses or brackets has been avoided so that the reader can savor the author's points without constant interruption.

The editor wishes to thank Drs. James Forsythe and Helmut Schmeller of Fort Hays State for their technical advice which has proved helpful to someone embarking upon his first scholarly endeavor as an editor. As is the case in all such efforts, the editor must bear responsibility for any oversights.

Typing of the manuscript was done by work study students of the History Department.

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PREFACE

During the late nineteenth century American settlers and emigrants from Germany, Russia, Switzerland, and Sweden moved westward seeking a place to live in peace, raise their families, and better their lives. They slogged through the muddy trails of the Missouri and slowly progressed through the drier but barely discernible trails of Nebraska until they arrived at what is now Cheyenne County, Kansas. Spying extraordinarily level land, they hurriedly constructed dug-outs in an area where now exist the townships and communities of Benkleman, Lawn Ridge, Bird City, Alexander, and St. Francis. During their first five years from 1885 to 1890 they experienced hardships which galvanized and molded them into the sturdy, philosophical, humorous, and optimistic plains pioneer. Beset by drought, grasshoppers, blizzards, dust storms, and prairie fires, some gave up and returned east; but most remained to carve out a new existence.

As the virgin soil of the "Great American Desert" yielded more food, the people built better homes from sod. They founded the first town in 1882 and named it Wano.[1] Chartered in 1887 with a capital stock of $2,150, Wano prospered for seven years from 1882-1889, becoming the second town in population and importance in Cheyenne County.[2] During this time Bird City, the most important town in the county, "was as lively as they made county seats." Its population almost reached 500 people.[3] The prospects of Wano and Bird City suddenly turned sour in 1889 when the all-powerful B & M Railroad, later the Burlington and Quincy, with the assistance of the Lincoln, Nebraska Land Company laid out another town fifteen miles to the west which they named St. Francis and called upon the citizens to make it the county seat. An election was held and a decisive majority approved the county seat transfer. Like other county seat contests in the sixth district where Cheyenne County is located, "not a gun was fired" in this struggle. Immediately the several hundred people who lived in Wano abandoned it for

St. Francis. Today, what was once a thriving community of thrifty residents is farm land with nothing except a historical marker to commemorate the deceased.

Bird City survived but for several years it "almost quit business" as many of the merchants went elsewhere. The courthouse and its grounds were sold to the county which converted the site into a poor farm, and many of the town buildings were sold to farmers who moved them to the country. After losing the county seat, the few remained "made good". Unlike Wano, Bird City did not fade into the oblivion experienced by so many aspiring boom towns whose dreams of commercial and political ascendency over their county, or region, were crushed by the realities of economics, geography, or the whims of those corporate entities the railroad and the land company who held the very existence of such communities within their grasp. In the 1920's, Bird City experienced some recovery as it benefitted from the general prosperity of the farmers of the county.[4]

According to the Fourth Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture, the population of Cheyenne County was only 204 in 1885, but just one year later it reached 1,208. County population continued to grow for the next four years, but peaked in 1890. Many residents engaged in stock raising and farming, particularly wheat farming. Total acreage farmed in 1886 was 13,141 with a total value of $123,591.[5] As farmers and stockraisers, Cheyenne County residents supported activities intended to improve the area's agricultural standing and output. A tremendously significant project which helped boost the population and prospects of St. Francis considerably was the construction of a thirty-seven mile irrigation ditch by the South Fork Irrigation Company. The ditch, which cost approximately $350,000, was completed in 1890. Opening day ceremonies drew a crowd estimated at 2,500. Senator Preston B. Plumb gave a keynote speech on the accomplishment at the county fair.

Although the ditch ultimately failed because there was not enough water to irrigate the vast tracts of farming land, St. Francis boomed as prospective farmers, stock raisers, and speculators flooded into take advantage of the opportunities presented by the advancement. In only its second year of existence St. Francis claimed 600 inhabitants.[6] St. Francis continued to experience steady growth and prosperity, except for a five year period between 1893 and 1898 when it suffered "hard times" as a result of the Depression of 1893 which severely strapped the entire country and produced agrarian reform movements in the mid-west. R. M. Jaqua, a prominent local real estate developer who briefly left St. Francis for Kansas City, in 1893 to find a job had this recollection of the depression. "There was nothing to do . . . here. (St. Francis) But when I got to Kansas City . . ., I could find no job. Was it any wonder that we were so hard up out here when the whole world was in a panic? Well, I concluded to come back here and stick it out somehow, and I did. We managed to live through it, although I don't know how we did it."[7]

With the return of prosperity the old sand streets of St. Francis disappeared giving way to shale and gravel; cement sidewalks replaced the old wooden ones; and new brick buildings took the place of the old wood frames. The former pioneer town became "a thriving metropolis" and "one of the biggest grain and livestock markets in northwestern Kansas." As "land [prices] advanced far beyond [those] of any other county around," local newspapers took note of the frequency with which so many people seemed to be exhibiting upward social and economic mobility.[8] The Topeka Capitol cited seven such individuals to support its thesis that rapidly escalating land prices and excessively heavy rainfall were transforming paupers into men of riches. It and other papers firmly believed that the area was a veritable "Garden of Eden" bestowing dramatic economic prosperity and magnificent water supplies upon its fortunate residents between 1890 and 1920

with the exception of the Depression of 1893 and a poor crop year in 1911.[9]

Who were the self-made men of St. Francis and how did they rise? Consider C. J. Devore, "who got rich in less than two years. . . . A down east, flat broke Kansas farmer," who went to Cheyenne, "he borrowed money and bought a three-quarter section of land for forty dollars an acre, then added another quarter to make a full section. Last spring," reported the Capitol in 1919, "he sold the entire section for fifty dollars an acre, reaping a profit of $10,000." Then there is the Indorf boy who returned from the first world war with nothing and suddenly became $10,000 richer when his brother gave him one-half interest in the family farm. Harley B. Bear, one of the most prominent of all St. Francis residents, was "just an ordinary country boy in 1886" when he obtained a job in the St. Francis printing office. He worked for one dollar a week, wore old clothes, and "grubbed about for food." By 1919 he had become "one of the most substantial lumbermen in Kansas" because he "put his savings in Cheyenne County land."[10]

Not everyone prospered and those who did had to undergo tremendous deprivation, suffering, and hardship. The wealth Cheyenne County residents acquired was the result of years of saving, sacrificing, and investing in the right property at the right time despite newspaper implications to the contrary. The struggle of these pioneers to realize better opportunities and the development of the county as well as its diversity are a subject that has been explored by three residents who experienced many of the events described. While their memoirs do not relate the whole story, they are representative of the life and culture of late nineteenth and early twentieth century small town America. Written by a native-born American male of German ancestry, a male German immigrant, and a woman who was the wife of a German immigrant, they capture a microcosm constituting what at first some

might stereotype as the homogenous plains community, but which in reality was extremely diverse and complex.

Collectively these memoirs offer insights into social history, the ethnicity on the plains, the web of family relations, the roles and perceptions of a frontier woman, and a way of life that is now extinct. Individually, they outline values and attitudes characterizing people who came from different social classes, geography, and cultural experiences. The first memoir is by Ole Robert Cram, 1887-1979, who is a personification of the American success story. As such he expresses an ambivalence common in a number of self-made men. On one hand he stresses the value of education, seems philosophical, takes issue with Mark Twain, and discusses human perfectability. But on the other hand he indicates in a subsequent paragraph what he really means by striving for perfection; discovering, i.e., anticipating the rise in real estate values!

His memoir is valuable for the contrast it provides between the lifestyle and opinions of the middle/upper-middle class American and those at the lower end of the social and economic scale. His participation in leisure activities such as touring before the end of the nineteenth century not only illustrates the American passion for diversion which originated more than eighty years ago, but also reflects his superior social and economic station compared to the other two memoirists. Living in an age when specialization was far less developed than today, he demonstrated that an active and energetic man could achieve prominence and that his chances probably improved if he grew to maturity in a sparsely populated area. Outlining the avenues which members of his class pursued to ascend the ladder of mobility, he seems to suggest the Horatio Alger myth had many variations. In his account he implies that white American males, unlike first generation immigrants who were too conspicuous or women who were blocked by social conventions, could and did rise in small communities across the land by plunging into a number

of occupations with perserverence, gusto, and an eye for the main chance. Joining community organizations such as the Rotary and the International Order of Odd Fellows not only offered a social outlet and a mechanism for association but also provided the rationale which Americans considered necessary to help justify hunger for money and making it with a large dose of noblesse oblige What is striking about Robert Cram is the ease with which he changes jobs, his simultaneous involvement in several different careers, and his quick ascension from just another worker to positions of responsibility in his chosen endeavors.

Born at Stockton, Kansas, in 1887 Robert Cram came to Cheyenne County in 1897 to settle on his grandfather's 1886 homestead. Beginning with an "Apology" for not having achieved greater excellence in any one field, which is really a reflection of his modesty, he recounts his activities as homesteader, farmer, salesman, repairman, attorney, banker, public school teacher at age fifteen, county superintendent of public instruction, county surveyor, county attorney, member of the Kansas House of Representatives for six terms, and aviator. In his public school service he is more atypical than typical. Although country school students commonly ranged in age from five to twenty and it was not unusual for teachers to be younger than some of their students, a male teacher was an exception because one room country schoolhouses were staffed mostly by women from farms and small towns. In 1914 when Robert Cram was teaching, only 18.7 percent of all Kansas teachers were men. They were less conspicuous because they demanded higher wages and got them as evidenced by the fact that in this same year men on the average were earning seventeen more dollars per month than their female counterparts. By-in-large Kansas country school teachers were "moral people" because they were always on trial in the communities where they taught. Drilling their students with daily recitations and forcing them to memorize multiplication tables, poems, dates, places, definitions, geography, and

hundreds of words from spellers, they achieved a literacy rate comparable to urban consolidated school districts.[11]

Robert Cram devotedly and tirelessly worked for the improvement of Cheyenne County and its schools. He was a major force in helping G. E. Greene, appointed principal of St. Francis High School in 1930, and Dick Thompson persuade the German and German-Russian boys to enter public high school. Perhaps motivated by his marriage into the German community Mr. Cram used his influence to convince the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to build an addition onto the high school thereby creating jobs for members of different ethnic groups who intermingled, made friends, and learned English. When the high school addition was finished, he and Mary Henry Manson, a descendent of several of the county's earliest school teachers, promoted a huge Christmas celebration in the new gymnasium-auditorium addition which Mr. Greene persuaded the Germans to approve at a bond election with the promise that German boys could use it as a showcase for wrestling exhibitions and contests. At the celebration carols were sung in English and then in German. This became a highly popular yearly tradition and helped unify the ethnic groups of Cheyenne County. Both German boys and girls (who had been dropping out after the third or fourth grade to help at home or to "work out") began attending St. Francis High. Although this marked a significant forward stride, residents still clung tenaciously to their rural grade schools, which they believed formed the center of a vigorous community and family life. To them school consolidation was an anathema. Thus, it was not until the 1960's when smaller families forced school closure through the loss of state aid that the concept of school consolidation, which Robert Cram supported, finally prevailed over the one room schoolhouse.[12]

In 1921 Robert Cram related to Harry Root, an "Old Timer With His Ear to the Grass Roots," some reminiscences of the previous twenty-four years. In 1897 the closest neighbor was "three miles [away]. At noon one time" the Cram "family saw

a buggy passing half a mile off, and this created more interest and speculation than would an aeroplane in these times." But since that time "no less than ten improved farms and homes with private electric lighting, water systems, and modern in every way," as well as "a graded road running on section lines" have been added. In 1900 the Cram family "traded a $30 calf for 160 acres of level land three miles from Bird City. A few years later they bought an adjoining 160 acres for $300." At this time $300 "looked like a big price" but these "same quarter sections would now sell for $10,000 each. Sales at $100 are common around Bird City." From 1897-1921 Robert Cram "never failed to raise some kind of a crop. For several years crops [were] short" because of "winds, drought, and grasshoppers, but in recent years yields of twenty, thirty, and forty bushels of wheat" per acre "have been common."[13]

Although Robert Cram was influential in many county developments, his memoirs scarcely reflect this. Widely counted on to make a success of any project to which he applied his prodigious energy, insight, and sustained effort, many sought his legal, financial, and family advice. His kindly interest, concern, and sympathy for others enhanced his popularity, especially among older men and women. Careful not to abuse power he remarked when asked why he took up so many different careers, "I just moved into the void as need or opportunity arose for someone to work in some new area."[14]

Robert Cram was active until almost the very moment of his death. When asked to what he attributed his long life, he said in his droll way: "Well, I just never did die." Relatives vividly recall seeing him dancing with one of his granddaughters when he was ninety years old, and he remained chairman of the Cheyenne County State Bank Board until the very end.[15] Robert Cram was a powerful and dominant individual, yet he practiced the democratic humbleness that Americans have come to expect from their leaders as the following newspaper excerpt makes abundantly clear.

> Robert Cram is a member of the legislature from Cheyenne County. The St. Francis Herald says the joke is on the legislative member. He was returning home late at night in his auto and left it standing. A sudden wind came up, blowing a flap of the side curtain down, which lodged on the electric horn in such a way as to set it in motion. For a few hours the horn set up a loud and dismal honk. When the neighbors couldn't endure it any longer an investigation was made and the crowd who gathered at the Cram home didn't disperse until the member of the legislature passed around cigars.[16]

The second memoir is by Georg Hermann Isernhagen, 1880-1937, who was born in Hannover, Germany, and immigrated to America in 1905 after he was released from the German Imperial Navy. He wrote his account during the mid-1930's in German. Translated into English by Pastor G. Kolb of the Lutheran Church, the portion of Isernhagen's story appearing in this study begins with his decision to purchase tickets for himself and his brother to the new country. Isernhagen was particularly drawn to Kansas because he had two brothers who were already living in Agra, which is near Kensington. By 1907, however, he decided to forsake family ties for the chance of acquiring his own property. (All available homesteads in the Agra-Kensington area had been claimed.) Learning that free homesteads could still be obtained in Cheyenne County near St. Francis, Isernhagen went there.[17]

Isernhagen never explicitly states why he finds America so attractive but implies that it offers more room and opportunity than Germany. Confronted with choosing between remaining with his parents and sweetheart or coming to America, he readily seems to give America higher priority thereby lending credence to the stereotype of the sacrifice anything, single-minded immigrant portrayed in literature and motion pictures such as Elia Kazan's <u>America, America</u>. Yet this is not the case. Interviews reveal that many years after he

married another woman, he attempted, with the aid of friends who either paid him an extra penny for products he sold them or reduced his purchases by one penny, to save enough money to bring his former sweetheart to America. When he finally had the fare, he wrote her in the 1930's to come, but she refused saying she was happy in the bosom of her family and her native land. Obviously there were instances in which the appeal of America was not so overriding as to blot out all other concerns.

Isernhagen's wife, Elizabeth Zweygardt Isernhagen, could not hide her relief when the project fell through. Always magnanimous when asked how she felt about bringing the German girl to St. Francis--"If she is having a bad time, I want her brought"--Elizabeth suffered from a social and cultural stigma that probably had some bearing on her husband's actions besides the fact that he wanted the best of both possible worlds. Born out of wedlock in Russia because her parents could not marry when her father was suddenly forced into the Russian army, Elizabeth was two months old when she attended their wedding. Details of her birth were kept secret from her and most of the children, particularly the girls. Her husband never mention her by name in his account, and he gives his story to his children, implying that his helpmate does not deserve such an honor.[18]

Although Isernhagen and his fellow immigrants live in a self-contained ethnic community, they are far from harmonious or unified. In his description of the great diversity that exists among the Germans in religion, language, and culture, he demonstrates that the consensus interpretation of immigrant communities does not apply in this case.[19] In 1880 Germans in Cheyenne County constituted 100 per cent of the foreign born population, which consisted of only four people. Ten years later they represented 37 per cent or 200 members. By 1900 they had fallen to almost 34 per cent or 129 people. Thus Isernhagen is important because he sheds lights on the experiences and culture of one-third of the county's foreign

born population which excerised influence beyond its numbers through inter-marriage with non-Germans.[20]

Profoundly religious and deterministic Isernhagen ascribes the important turning points in his life to the will of God. To a large extent he mirrors the first generation immigrant. Unable to completely adjust to America or consider it home, he also realizes that he cannot return to Germany--that his roots have been transplanted to the new land. Holding fast to the mores of the old country, from which he never departs, he asserts that it is "the destiny of girls . . . to get married," and expresses shock at the readiness of the new generation to depart from tradition. His existence is one of essentials. It is hard, brutal, and demanding. There is no one to rely upon but oneself. The work day is seventeen and one-half hours long, including the eight miles he must walk to get to and from the job. He earns eighty-five cents a day. These hardships probably explain his later antipathy toward the public relief projects of the New Deal which he characterizes as "one frog pond after another" constructed by "men who were really tops in idleness." The only leisure time he has is an occasional Sunday when he attends church, socializes and is perhaps invited to dinner. In a society where men sit on one side of the church and women on the other, a social and cultural obligation is exacted with these invitations. While he is still single, Isernhagen's various hosts expect him to seriously assess their most eligible daughter for his prospective mate.[21]

The third memoir, written by Nancy Ellen Moore Wieck, 1873-1959, contains considerable information on agriculture, the roles and perceptions of a frontier woman, and the web of family relations. Ellen's children found her manuscript in an old trunk which her husband had brought from Germany in 1881. She poignantly discusses the pivotal events in her life such as pioneering, homesteading, the constant struggle with nature, marriage when she was only fifteen, the birth of her twelve children (four of whom died), disease, and giving her

husband's mother, who can no longer fend for herself, a place to live.

The natural calamities which Ellen describes are well-known to plains pioneers. The widespread drought of 1911, for example, during which even the weeds failed to grow and many cattle in Cheyenne and other counties starved, caught the Weick family without a roof on their cement block house. The family, including her husband John's mother, still occupied a one room (14' by 16') soddy and a one room (12' by 14') frame clapboard building which they called the "chicken house." Later the frame truly was a chicken house. During the summer the family overflowed into tents and when winter struck the Wieck's took up residence in the barn. During this time Ellen captures in her account the misery of prolonged snow and cold, poor and crowded shelter, semi-starvation with rationing of food and fuel, and daily efforts to force weakened cattle to stand by "tailing" which involved one person holding onto the tail and bracing the feet while the other person kicked the cow until it got up. When John, the three oldest boys, and one of the daughters go to Nebraska in the spring of 1912 to "work out," Ellen and the younger children carry on alone. They stretch their cattle feed, a three-year old stack of straw, until the weeds begin to sprout and John sends home some wages. Then Ellen purchases two sacks of grain and proceeds to feed each cow by the handful. If any died she did not record it.[22]

Since surival is a primary concern, Ellen Wieck and her family have little time for leisure or social activities. When there is an occasional lull, games are made-up relying upon imagination rather than purchased toys which the family cannot afford. Unlike the modern family this frontier family performs duties and functions that are now carried out by a variety of institutions such as nursing homes for the elderly.[23] The Wieck's view of death is vastly different from today. Although saddened by death, the family reconciles itself to the loss, helps others in the same situation, and

does not become frustrated by sudden and inexplicable demise from diseases that are now easily cured or controlled. Perhaps the Wieck's are able to be philosophical because the prevailing view of the world which they inhabited was that every experience whether good or bad, was part of a grand design on the part of God whom man should not question because He was beyond man's comprehension.

Like Georg Isernhagen, who moved nine times in two years, and Robert Cram, whose family moved four times during his early childhood, Ellen Wieck and her family display a high rate of physical mobility. Population turnover, which some scholars have designated a reflection of frontier character, was apparently the order of the day in Cheyenne County, if these three memoirs are any indication. Although precise measurement and quantitative analysis remain to be done, the evidence in the memoirs not only supports a high rate of physical mobility but also social mobility among the native born as well as the immigrants. Indices of acculturation such as intermarriage, the disappearance of traditional customs and beliefs, efforts by native born Americans to reduce the social distance between them and the newcomers, and attempts to bring the foreign born into closer association with community life are chronicled in the memoirs. Overall the picture they provide is not one of rapid and easy acculturation as one might expect, but instead one of slow, uneven progress consuming many years. Further verification is necessary, but my suspicion is that the memoirs are correct in this respect.[24]

Superficially, Ellen Wieck seems to have the lot and submissiveness of the typical late nineteenth, early twentieth century woman. Yet when her husband leaves to "work out" in Nebraska, she assumes his duties as well as hers, implying that she is equal to or better than he. On another occasion she offers to purchase land in her husband's name without his permission so that she will not have to move to Alberta, Canada. Although subverting her husband's inclinications, he

accepts it and calls her "boss". This suggests that certain pioneer women may not have been as passive, submissive, or lacking in options as the stereotype leads us to believe.[25]

Ellen Wieck wrote her memoir between 1951 and 1959 while living alone in Goodland, Kansas. Just as she finished writing about the construction of her house in 1913, she became ill and passed away February 20, 1959. As a result, her memoir ends very abruptly.[26]

David Hackett Fischer has noted that "one of the difficulties of the new social history is [discovering] primary evidence." Indeed, many new social historians have relied upon quantitative analysis to surmount this problem, frequently lamenting that this is their only recourse because the common man left few written records. Yet, to what extent have they rummaged through local sources to verify their assertion? The memoirs in this issue indicate that themes of interest to the new social historians can be located in primary source material with appropriate and intensive digging.[27]

Lee F. Pendergrass
Hays, Kansas
May, 1980

Notes

[1]Albert Whisnant, Cheyenne Land and Its Heritage (St. Francis, KS., 1972), n.p.

[2]Harry Root, "Sixth District News Notes, 1920-1922," Clippings in the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka.

[3]Root, "Sixth District News Notes," Topeka Journal, September 7, 1920.

[4]Ibid. See Daniel Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York, 1965) for an analysis of boosterism in boom towns. Henry F. Mason's, "County Seat Controversies in Southwestern Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 2 (February, 1933), 45-65 is a historical review of county seat struggles.

[5]Whisnant, Cheyenne Land.

[6]Topeka Journal, May 1, 1920.

[7]Ibid.; Bird City Times, January 21, 1932. David Thelen in The New Citizenship: the Origins of Progressivism in Wisconsin, 1885-1900 (Columbia, Mo.; 1972) analyzes midwestern reform as an outgrowth of the Depression of 1893.

[8]Topeka Journal, May 1, 1920.

[9]Topeka Capitol, October 5, 1919; Topeka Journal, February 12, 1921; Topeka Journal, May 27, 1922; Cheyenne County Clippings, Kansas State Historical Society. See Everett Dick, Conquering the Great American Desert: Nebraska (Lincoln, 1975) for a discussion of the application and response to the themes of the Great American Desert and the Garden of Eden.

[10]Topeka Capitol, October 5, 1919.

[11]Wayne E. Fuller, "Country School Teaching on the Sod House Frontier," Arizona and the West, 17 (Summer, 1975), 121-140.

[12]Interview with Dr. Lucille Stephenson, longtime resident of St. Francis, January 31, 1980.

[13]Topeka Journal, February 12, 1921.

[14]Interview with Dr. Stephenson, also a longtime acquaintance of Robert Cram. January 31, 1980.

[15]Ibid; interview with Mr. and Mrs. Warren Northrup, January 30, 1980. Both knew Mr. Cram very well.

[16]Topeka Journal, April 8, 1922.

[17]Interview with Dr. Stephenson and Lydia Landenberger, daughter of Georg Isernhagen, January 31, 1980.

[18]Ibid. Although her mental faculties are reduced, Elizabeth Isernhagen is still alive at this time.

[19]One example of the consensus interpretation is John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, 1965).

[20]Compendium of the Tenth Census, 1880 (Washington, 1883), Part I, 505; Compendium of the Eleventh Census, 1890 (Washington, 1894), Part II, 631; Twelfth Census of the United States: Population (Washington, 1901), Part I, 752.

[21]Interview with Lydia Landenberger, January 31, 1980. A classic analysis of the first generation immigrant is Oscar Handlin's The Uprooted. 2nd enl. ed. (New York, 1973).

[22]Interview with Dr. Stephenson, January 31, 1980.

[23]Christopher Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged (New York, 1977) argues that the helping professions intentionally appropriated from the family the functions it performed until the first part of the twentieth century.

[24]Merle Curti, The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County (Stanford, California, 1959) has examined these themes in the process of testing the Turner Thesis which is named for the noted University of Wisconsin historian who held that the existence of free land determined the American character.

[25]Anne Firor Scott, The American Woman: Who Was She? (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971) tends to support the stereotype.

[26]Interview with Dr. Stephenson, January 31, 1980.

[27]David Hackett Fischer, Growing Old in America (New York, 1978), forward.

MEMOIR: OLE ROBERT CRAM, SR.

I was born at Stockton, Kansas, Rooks County,[1] March 22, 1887. The common ancestor of most of the Cram families in America, was John Cram, of New Castle on Tyne, in England, who came to America at the Boston Bay area, in 1635, and remained. He went northward and eastward, thru Vermont and New Hampshire. Among his descendants, was Phillip Cram, who had a son named Abram E. Cram. Abram had a son named James Edwin Cram. My father was a son of James Abram. He was born in Vermont, as was my maternal Grandmother, Sarah A. Judd. Grandfather Cram was a soldier in the 8th Vermont Regiment in the Civil War. After the war, he moved, with his family to Iowa in the Marshall town area. My mother came from the Joseph Forrey family, which migrated from Western Pennsylvania. Known as Pennyslvania Dutch folks, these also located in the Marshall town area.

My father was a blacksmith by trade, as was his father before him. He and my mother came to Rooks County, Kansas, after their marriage. Soon after my birth, my father commenced work for the Santa Fe Railroad, and moved to Concordia for a few weeks, then on to Emporia.[2] Father continued as a fireman and engineer with the railroad company, until 1894 when he went on strike. His union was the American Railway Union, (ARU).

Our family lived in Emporia, Kansas until I was ten. While the family was at Emporia I attended the common schools thru 4th grade. In the spring of 1897, father moved his family to grandfather Cram's farm, a few miles northwest of Bird City,[3] in Cheyenne County. Grandfather had taken

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[1]Stockton is the county seat of Rooks County. It is approximately 160 miles east of St. Francis.

[2]Concordia is approximately 130 miles east of Stockton, Emporia is 390 miles from St. Francis.

[3]Bird City is 15 miles east of St. Francis.

this land as a homestead in 1885, and lived there with his family, wife and two small sons. This was his second wife, hence a step-mother to my father. She died however, in 1894. Grandfather and the two small boys continued to live on the farm until 1897. He was no longer able to handle the work. So he offered the farm, livestock and equipment to my father, under the plan that he and the boys would also live with us. However, the older of the two boys, my Uncle Fred D. Cram,[4] went back to the old home area in Iowa that spring and made his own way thereafter. Grandfather and the younger son, George A. Cram, continued to live with us for some years.

The rest of the family came to Bird City by railroad. I came with my uncle Elmer Forrey, mother's brother, with a team and light, two seated buggy. We drove thru in about two weeks, camping out along the highway each night, doing our own cooking, and feeding the horses at each night's stop. This was a grand experience for me, and my uncle passed on a lot of old fashioned horse and buggy philosophy to me. We arrived at Bird City on May 29, the day before Decoration Day. Next day, we attended the regular Decoration

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[4]Fred Cram had these recollections about pioneer life in Cheyenne County. "We did not live high, but we had plenty to eat. We kids had never been used to many luxuries, and we did not expect much in the way of knick knacks. . . . Our first winter we burned about 100 pounds of coal. The rest of our heat was derived from tumble weeds [which] had gathered in large numbers. . . . We strung them on a long rope, and let the wind help us roll them to the house . . . . I knew of pioneers wrapping themselves in bed clothes to keep warm, and if things got too bad, they went to bed and stayed there. After the first winter we used corn stalks for fuel. . . . Pioneering in northwest Kansas was somewhat different from that of Iowa, where there was water and wood usually. We had to haul water in barrels for a long time. We never had any wood to burn, of course. As we got better off, we used coal, mostly, which in those days was pretty expensive." See Cheyenne County Clippings in the Kansas State Historical Society. These experiences are virtually identical to those described by Everett Dick in Conquering the Great American Desert.

Day ceremonies at Bird City and the Cemetery. Grandfather, being a soldier of the Civil War, of course was much interested, as were all the rest of us.

Grandfather's homestead was 160 acres, and was about the roughest tract of land to be found. It was cut up by three draws or gullys running thru it, leaving only some small fields for actual cultivation. The buildings were very simple and primitive. However, there was a good well and windmill. The crops of 1897 were very poor. We existed mainly on milk and odd labor jobs that father could find. He did some blacksmithing work in Bird City. A neighbor loaned us two cows on the basis that we would care for the cows and calf, but we would have milk for the family use, over and above the needs of the calf.

In the year 1900, father obtained title to a very fine level quarter section of land, lying three miles southwest of Bird City. He traded a yearling calf for this 160 acre tract. There were no buildings on the land. But we moved the dwelling and other buildings from Grandfather's land to this better farm southwest of Bird City. We also added additional buildings by purchasing old non-used dwellings and barns from other farms. The family moved to this new farm in 1901. Eventually we had a fairly comfortable dwelling, with plenty of room, plenty of barn and shed room, well and windmill, three cisterns for storing water, and the usual fencing and additional farm improvements. Father always had a shop, with blacksmith and wood working tools. Later on he purchased two adjoining quarter sections of land and rented additional land for farming and pasture use.

I was always much more interested in the mechanical part of farm work, and would always prefer working in the shop to working with livestock or in the fields. But of course I did all the usual work in all phases. Sometimes we had a large herd of cattle to watch and herd. I helped with branding, dehorning, calving, and feeding. Sometimes we milked as many as 20 milk cows during the season, and I

helped with that chore regularly. Cream sales made up a large part of our farm income. I helped train calves to drink from a bucket. I suggest you try it sometime, if you long for excitement!

In those days, wheat and small grain was harvested mostly, by use of a header, which severed the grain and elevated it into header barge wagons, drawn along side of the header. I drove the header, which is no small job. One has to stand a stride of the tiller over the small rear steering wheel, and manage the six horses, as well as steer the machine correctly thru the field. Later we had steam power threshing machinery, and I was the engineer. Later my younger brother also took over the engine controls. Several seasons we did custom steam engine power plowing. We broke out several quarter sections of native grass land for customers. However, the steam engine required so much extra time for servicing, for water and fuel, and attendant delays, that engine plowing was not generally profitable for us.

One season, I worked out, as engineer for a 30 horsepower steam plowing rig at McDonald, Kansas.[5] Ed Lyman was the owner. We pulled 30 disc plows, cutting a swath of twelve to fifteen feet, and at same time pulling a smoothing device to help smooth the rough sod behind the plows. We had a full crew and equipment, with cook house and bunk house, water wagon and repair wagon, etc. We did some major jobs of repairing the machinery, as need arose.

I sandwiched my school work in with farm work, until I began teaching in the St. Francis, Cheyenne County High School in the fall of 1910. After that I did not have occasion to do much actual farm work. However, in 1918,

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[5]McDonald is approximately 23 miles east of St. Francis.

World War I was in full swing, and everyone was urged to contribute his labor in any way he could towards greater food production. So I helped in the harvest of that year. The first combine thresher sold in Cheyenne County was bought by Mr. Denny. And I was employed to run it, since I had the threshing experience of former years. This machine was a real curiosity and we had many visitors come to watch it work. Prior to the Combine, threshing had to be done as a separate operation, later in the season after the grain had been placed in stacks or shocks.

1906--Robert Cram: Farmer, thresher, and mechanic running the first "combine" thresher to operate in Cheyenne County. Its owner was Charles Denny of Lawn Ridge Community.

Later on, I acquired several tracts of farm land as an investment. At one time, about 1950, I had upwards of four sections of Cheyenne County farm and pasture lands. I always rented it to tenants, instead of trying to farm it on my own account. As of 1970, I have 480 acres of level wheat land in Lawn Ridge Township.[6] My renter, Junior Smull and his father before him, have been my renters for 25 years or more. The wheat crop this year was 49 bushels per acre, but acres are so restricted that the year rent income in barley is about 5% income on investment value.

ROMANCE

As a youngster, approaching the early teens, I was most desparately and beyond the ultimate, bashful, especially toward girls. Of course I had my sister in the family as a sort of girl to observe. But since she was some five years years younger, I was not much impressed with her actions and ideas. I am sure I was about the utmost in being "green". And it was very painful. I wasn't green just from choice. Parties for the young folks were common with the neighbors. As I remember I thought I ought ask some girl to go along with me to my first party invitation. In turn, I asked the three teenage girls of my school class, the 8th grade, I believe, to let me take her to the party. But each one had something to do, hence no deal. Well, I went to the party alone.

Sometime later, at teacher's Normal in a summer session at St. Francis, I managed to walk along with a neighbor girl to an evening social hour, and walked back with her to her residence. Later I was at a farm home dance, where they were doing square dances. I walked across the room to where

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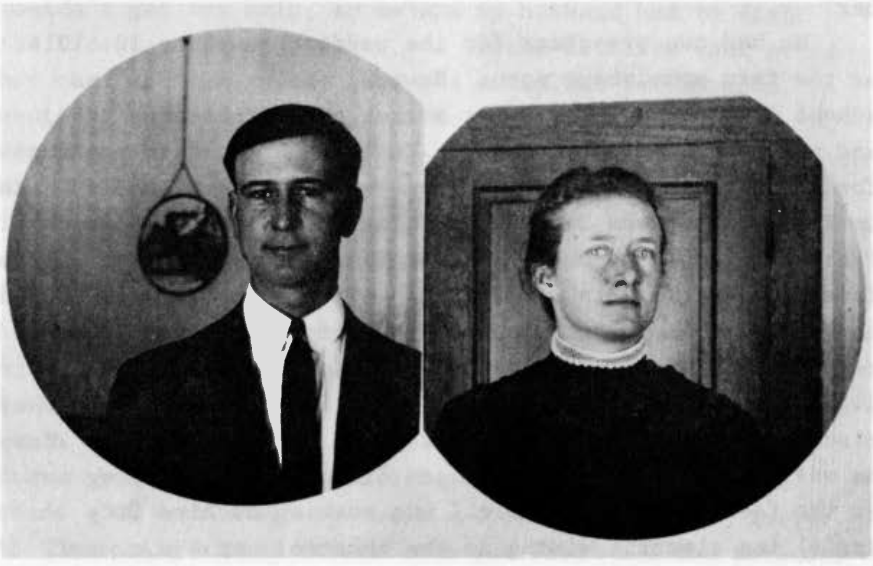
[6]Lawn Ridge township is approximately ten miles south of St. Francis.

the ladies were seated intending to ask one of them to be my partner for the next dance. As I stood before her, my tongue simply would not work. I couldn't manage a single word. But the lady was really understanding, and accepted, and we did the dance okay.

It was while attending teacher's Normal at St. Francis that I first met Elizabeth who was also attending the normal. It was a four week session, and the instruction was in the subjects required for obtaining a teacher's certificate. However, I did not have any date with her at that session.



About 1914--Robert and Elizabeth (Ringo) Cram soon after their marriage.

Sometime later, at Bird City, I was on my bicycle, riding from the railroad to the town, half a mile away, and here was Elizabeth walking in the same direction. She went over to Bird City and gave piano lessons on certain days. Well, I got off of the bicycle and walked along with her to town. The occasion seemed to provide an excuse for me to walk along. Eventually we did not need any excuse to be together at programs and social events. As I had an automobile we often went places in it, and usually other young folks were along. We both had a large line of friends and acquaintances by that time. We spent many Sunday evenings in the parlor, looking at pictures, also she played piano much of the time, which I dearly loved to hear. Finally one evening, I asked her if some time, she would be all mine for all time. The form of the question seemed to suit and she said she would. Later on at the farm, I managed to ask her mother if I could take her away. The mother said, she guessed that was up to her!

We had two preachers for the wedding, on June 30, 1914, at the farm home about noon. Several of our friends and school mates were there. Her mother and her brother Jake, and my father and mother came. We then took off in the car for a wedding trip, northward and westward, and finally landed in Estes Park, then Denver and Colorado Springs, and Pikes Peak and Cripple Creek. Housekeeping began in the small frame four room dwelling in St. Francis. It was an old delapidated house when I bought it, many months before. But I had it remodeled to considerable extent. Installed water and electric lights, and all was freshly painted. Son James was born there; also we were living there when son Ole Robert was born. But he was born at the Ringo farm, as Elizabeth was staying out at the farm that night while I was working at Bird City installing electric wiring in the theatre. At 4 a.m. call to me brought me rushing to the farm, but too late. Old Robert was already on the scene in full display and they even had him named already.

A MAN CHILD COMES TO THE HOME, THAN ANOTHER AND THEN ANOTHER!

As far as I can remember, the subject of children was never mentioned until after we were married. However, I do remember one time, we were discussing possible times for the marriage. We were engaged two or three years. Among other items of discussion, she mentioned that after marriage there might be other responsibilities, and I wondered just what she might mean!!! After a year of marriage, we began to think that we might be able to care for a child. But for quite a while none seemed to be on the way, and we began to be a bit worried! Then late in the fall of 1915, it became evident that an addition to the family was really on the way. It was a thrilling experience to note the gradual growth, and eventually the great amount of "work" that little fellow seemed to think he had to do. Doctor Jeffers was our doctor. Long before daylight, the morning of July 3, 1916, wife knew that it was about time for the baby's birth. We called the doctor. He said he would be right over. But he did not show up. It got to be long past daylight, and still he did not show up, so I called him again on the phone, and roused him from a deep sleep! He lived only a very few blocks away. Both doctor and wife did a lot of real hard work, hour after hour. I was there all the time. We had arranged for Mrs. Weidenheimer to be in attendance and help with the household duties, but did not call her until later in the afternoon. Finally, the doctor decided that he would have to use the instruments and some chloraform, but sparingly and carefully. Wife partially passed out, but the doctor succeeded in bringing son James out into the light. I was present, but not able to be of much help. We phoned Grandma Ringo right away and Uncle Jake brought her in from the farm. Mrs. Weidenheimer came, and I think there were other ladies or neighbors. The baby was quite blue, and did not respond too much. A bit of whiskey was obtained by the doctor, and a

few drops given to the baby. (I did not get any, but possibly could have done well with some myself), Grandma Ringo sat with the new baby all night, and eventually he became lively. Quite probably his life is due to the care that his grandma gave him that night!

Sometime early in 1918, it again became evident that another addition to the family was coming. We again enjoyed watching him develop and grow, and he also found that he had lots of work to do, and gave frequent evidence by his motions. Right after Harvest time, early in August, we made a pleasure trip to the Colorado Mountains. Little Jimmy was two years of age, and of course much interested in everything, but specially in bodies of water. When a lake appeared in our vision, he would shout "shee waaer!" We returned home and on the night of August 26, I was doing electrical work at Bird City, rewiring the Theater. I worked late and just remained in Bird City, sleeping on the stage floor. About daylight or sooner, a messenger came and routed me out and said I should get back to St. Francis and to the Ringo Farm. (Wife and Jimmy were staying at the farm that night.) I hastily got going and when I arrived I was met with the news that Ole Robert II was already on the scene. Aunt Rill, (Mrs. Burchet) was in charge and all was well. When little Ole began to make a fuss, Uncle Jake went after Aunt Rill, and she came promptly back. No doctor had been contacted, there was not time for calling the doctor. So it seemed ok to just pass up a doctor at that stage of the proceedings. So little Ole Robert II, made his advent on this planet without aid of doctor or medicine! They had already named him when I arrived, so I had no choice in the matter, and he has to bear that name ever since!!!

Then again, late in 1923, we became aware that still another addition to the family was knocking for admission. Granted! Were were then living in the dwelling in St. Francis that we had acquired from Arlie Danielson, who had built it a few years earlier. Along towards the morning of April 1, 1924

we called Doctor Peck, who was the family doctor. He came promptly, and I believe we also called Aunt Rill, (Mrs. Burchet) again. I was in attendance, and I hoped, in assistance, but I doubt if my assistance was of much force. But little Ernest Richard soon appeared, and all was well, even though it was April one day. Later in the day, as I was down town on the street, I had great difficulty in getting anyone to believe that we had another man child in our home.

As the children grew and went to school and were away from home more and more, we wondered just what we would do if they wanted a car to go gallivanting off to other towns, and perhaps with company that might lead into difficulties. But the problem never arose. They took an active part in the school activities, both athletic and scholastic. Never as super men in anyway, but just in a dependable and average way. Two of the boys were elected to the National Honor Society. Were nominated to take tests for scholarships, but were not awarded any. We were very fortunate in living within a couple blocks or less of the school building, thru the elementary school and high school.

In the years when the children were born, St. Francis had no hospital, hence most all births occurred in the homes of the parents. No matter how far out in the country people might live, they would call the doctor and he would drive out to the home. Often he had to spend many many hours bringing the new child to the light of the world. All of our children were born in the family residence, excepting Old Robert who was born in the home of his Uncle Jake and Grandmother Ringo, 6 miles out north of St. Francis.

MECHANICAL INCLINATION

I was much more interested, as I grew up, in mechanical work and machines, than I was in doing farm work or construction work or in merchandising or office work or clerking. I

enjoyed working in father's blacksmith shop and the handling, use and repair of the farm machinery. I simply did not like farming in general. I could not see much future in it. I would very much have liked to work on the railroad locomotives. To this day, the locomotive has an impelling, strong and thrilling attraction and fascination for me. I will go out of my way anytime just to see one. To me the smoke snorting iron horse is the real conqueror of the vast plains.

In my early teens, using the tools in father's workshop, I constructed from my own design, a working steam engine, modeled on the order of the then common steam thresher engine. My engine was about 2 1/2 feet in length and a couple feet high, and was mounted on wheels. However there was no gearing whereby the power of the engine could be applied to the wheels for traction on the land. But there was complete control for the engine. It had a throttle, and a reverse gear, and the link motion. It would turn in either direction. It was constructed of odds and ends of discarded parts of equipment, piping from an old oil stove, a small fly wheel that had been a pulley on some regular farm machine. The boiler was constructed of a 2 1/2 foot piece of 4 inch pipe, with a wooden plug at each end, and a threaded rod running laterally thru the center, with nut or burr on each end, thus holding quite a pressure. Heat was applied to the middle part of this boiler, by burning wood sticks or kindling. It had power enough to run a churn or light a family washing machine. Of course it was not actually practical for any sustained run or use.

I was intensely interested in getting a job as an engineer for some thresher owner. An acquaintance at St. Francis, Mr. Lonnie Hotchkiss, offered to help me find such a job, and suggested that I bring the engine I built, to St. Francis as an exhibit. I did. Quite a crowd of interested spectators gathered to watch the engine perform which it did nicely. In the meantime, I got a job as water boy for a steam thresher rig owned by Bret Waters of Bird City.

Next year my father and two neighbors, joined in buying a second steam thresher rig from Dan Collins. We did a full season of custom thresher work that fall. I was the engineer. Next year we bought a brand new steam thresher rig, a Huber make, and threshed with it several seasons, finally selling it to Anderson and Studer of Atwood, Kansas.[7] I went along to Atwood with the rig and was the engine man for several weeks. As the season ended, I went to College at McPherson, Kansas.

One summer I was the engineer for a large 30 horsepower steam plowing engine owned by Ed Lyman of McDonald, Kansas. We operated in the early summer, breaking out sod lands for new cultivation, I was in the height of my glory with this job. I drew $3.00 a day as pay. Ordinary farm labor wages were from $1.00 to $2.00 per day at that time. Work was from sun up to sundown all week, and even some on Sunday!

Had we lived near a railroad center or division point, I would no doubt have taken to the railroad work as an occupation.

Of course, the early efforts at automobiles intrigued me greatly. But owning an automobile at that time was entirely out of our family's reach. However, in year 1908, we purchased a second hand high wheel International Harvester Company gasoline powered carriage. A year or so later, we traded this for an early model five passenger REO Automobile, with a two cylinder underslung engine. In the spring of 1911, I obtained a brand new five passenger REO. It had a four cylinder, upright engine mounted in front like a modern hood. I got the agency for selling REO's from an agency at McCook.[8] During the next few years I managed to sell or trade several REO cars to purchasers around the area. I

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[7]Atwood, which is the county seat of Rawlins County, is approximately 42 miles east of St. Francis.

[8]McCook is in Nebraska, approximately 92 miles east of St. Francis.

also did custom livery work with my demonstrator auto a lot of the time hauling commercial travel.

In 1916 I became interested in Delco-light, a small 3/4 horse power gas engine and electrical generating plant, designed for sale and use by farmers and other places where electrical services were not otherwise available. There was no electrical CO-OP thru out the county at that time. I carried on this electrical business until the end of 1919. I made a real business out of the venture, and sold upwards of 100 of these plants. I did the selling, the installing and the wiring of the buildings and yards where the electrical current was to be used. I also sold many electrical appliances. Farmers were generally quite prosperous in this area then, with wheat prices running well above $2.00 per bushel and even as high as $3.00. Farmers were expanding and building new homes and out buildings. Some farmers actually told me that they would rather give up the auto than give up the Delco plant. I also did some general electrical wiring during this time.

I was associated with my brother, George, in general automobile repair work and sales, also automobile battery business and I had mine.

I sold the light plant business at the end of 1919, and joined in the venture of opening a new bank at Wheeler, Kansas.

BANKING

Until I became about 33 years of age, (1920) my experience with banks was from the customer side of the counter. I had to stand, hat in hand, and timidly ask if I could obtain a loan. However, early in 1920, some farmers living in

Wheeler, Kansas[9] obtained a charter for a State bank, and commenced the errection of small brick building to be the office and place of business. After they had gone this far, they lost the services of a man from Haigler, NB, who was to be the manager and cashier. Looking around for someone to take his place, they happened to see me. They talked about the project, and offered me the position as cashier, if I would join them and take a small part of the stock. I had never had banking experience, excepting for a few weeks in the summer, many years before, as a small boy when I had the chance to help with the bookkeeping work at a small bank in Bird City, Kansas.

However, I had had a few years of successful experience in the farm electrical business, (Delco-Light) and was quite well acquainted with about everybody in the county. So I accepted the offer, and took some ten shares of the bank stock, disposed of my electrical business, and moved the family to Wheeler and a 5 acre tract on which there was a small frame four room dwelling.

We opened the bank on June 14, 1920. I had made the acquaintance of Ed Stillwell of the Commercial National Bank of Kansas City, Kansas. He was a sort of field man for that

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[9]Wheeler is approximately 5 miles east of St. Francis. Laid out by the Lincoln, Nebraska Land Company it thrived during the building of the B & M railroad to St. Francis and continued to grow for a few years after the road's completion. But the onset of hard times, which were characterized by short crops resulting from grasshopper invasions and drought, produced outward migration until only one family remained. The family was headed by Theodore Lockard, "one of the landmarks of the county." In several elections Lockard, who was a Democrat and the only voter from Wheeler, customarily called up the county seat the day after the polls closed and reported that Wheeler had gone Democratic by one vote. Later Wheeler acquired "a large up to date store, lumber yard, three grain elevators, modern brick school house, garage, and the Farmer's State Bank." See Root, "Sixth District News Notes," Topeka Journal, March 19, 1921.

bank. He was pleased to come to Wheeler on our opening day, and give me some pointers as to managing a bank. We opened the box containing a new posting-adding machine. We played it by ear from then on. Some customers came in and made deposits. Some came in to ask for loans, and we made some of them. I also had the agency for some fire and windstorm insurance companies, and began writing insurance for customers. Our first main insurance business was hail insurance on growing crops. My salary was $150.00 per month, plus insurance business commissions. I had no other help in the bank. Business prospered moderately for a few months. Most farmers had become quite prosperous with the extra high crop prices, plus some unusually good crop yields in 1917, 1918, 1919 and 1920. However in the early 20's, farm product prices fell heavily. Wheat prices dropped from $2.50 per bushel to a dollar or less. Corn, cotton, tobacco and livestock prices also dropped severely. Customer deposits sagged drastically, and at the bank, we had a real struggle to maintain necessary cash balances to meet depositors demands. The bank had to resort to turning some of its notes to larger correspondent banks, like the Commercial National at Kansas City. But we managed to keep the bank solvent and able to withstand the regular State Banking Department examination, twice a year.

About the end of 1921, Mr. Sawhill, cashier and main stockholder of The Cheyenne County State Bank of St. Francis, Kansas, offered me the opportunity of purchasing ten shares of the stock of that bank, and becoming a director and Vice President. As it appeared to me this offered a much greater opportunity for future development, I accepted his offer. I sold my stock in the Wheeler bank to Mr. Slagle and Mr. Henry Daum, and moved my family back to St. Francis, and began active service with the Cheyenne County State Bank on February 20, 1922. Incidently, I might mention, that the "other side" of my household did not favor the move out of Wheeler, but went along with the project. We enjoyed life

at Wheeler very much, and became an active part of that community. There was a country store, quite complete, a new two room brick school house, a garage, and two grain handling concerns and a lumber company.

The Cheyenne County State Bank has footings[10] of about $225,000.00, deposits of about $110,000.00 and loans of about $90,000.00. Not much change occurred during the decade of 1920 to 1930. Then the big depression hit the nation in 1930, after the great stock market crash of 1929. The Citizens State Bank, our main competitor, had footings of roughly about twice those of our bank. In the fall of 1920, a local group of businessmen and farmers, organized the Farmers National Bank of St. Francis, Kansas, and opened for business on Thanksgiving Day in 1920. With its large group of stockholders and the leadership of some prominent men, it rapidly obtained total footings, deposits and loans of approximately the same as the Citizens State Bank.

The national bank examiners had insisted that this National bank invest some of its resources in obligations, other than mere farm notes. In late 1932 the market value of about $200,000 face value of foreign or non-local loans, had shrunk to the extent of upwards of $60,000. The National Bank examiners required this amount to be put up in cash by the stockholders of the National Bank, or the bank be closed. The stockholders refused, and the bank closed in October, 1932. Many banks were closing all over the nation. With the election of Franklin Roosevelt as President, many banks continued closing, as he took office in 1933. He immediately ordered the famous "Bank Holiday" and all banks closed temporarily. Upwards of one-third of the banks of the nation did not reopen. However, the Cheyenne County State Bank and the Citizens State Bank, were permitted to open, and

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[10]Footings is another term for basis. The term as used here means that the enterprise is being put on a firm footing.

have continued to this present day. Both banks have prospered with the rest of the nation and this area. Total footings of our bank are above $4,000,000, and footings of the Citizens State are nearly double that.

I might mention that it was a most severe strain on these two banks, when the Farmers National Bank closed in October 1932. The depositors and customers had been very loyal to these banks. During the same period two banks closed at Bird City; three at Benkleman; and two at Haigler.[11]

After Mr. Slagle and Mr. Daum took over the Farmers State Bank at Wheeler, they continued to operate it for two or three more years. But profits were too slim, and the Board of Directors all decided to close the bank. This was done in an orderly manner, and all depositors were paid out in full. However, there was not much resources left for the stockholders, and they actually lost the full amount of the purchase price of their stock. In those days the law provided that in case of bank closing, each stockholder was liable to the bank receiver for the full par value of his bank stock, if needed in order to pay off depositors. But no such additional charge had to be made to those stockholders of the Wheeler Bank.

With the general decline in volume of business and chances for bank income, it became apparent late in 1932, that there would not be income enough for salaries for Mr. Sawhill, the cashier, Mr. Miller, the assistant, and myself, vice president. So it was decided that I drop out of service to the bank as a salaried executive.

I should mention that at the time I began work with The Cheyenne County State Bank in 1922, Mr. Miller and Mr. Sawhill and myself were the only employees. Mr. Miller ran

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[11]Haigler, which is barely in Nebraska across the state line, lies about 15 miles north of St. Francis. Benkleman is about 25 miles east of Haigler.

the books most of the time, but I also ran the books some of the time and did the posting each day. (All checks and deposits have to be entered to each customer's account every day.)

My bank services since 1933, have been to continue as vice-president, and later as Chairman of the Board; to act and work as a director to assist as the attorney and as a member of the loan committee; and with the general director and management of the bank. The bank furnished me space in the rear of the premises for my personal law and abstract business. (To this extent, I can say, as of 1970, that I have had 50 years of banking service!) I have enjoyed the work and experience very much. During the depression years, state law provided that a bank official or manager or officer could be found guilty of a felony and sent to prison, if he knowingly received deposits in the bank, at a time when the bank was in a failing condition. We were operating plenty close to such a condition, some of the time during those depression years. However with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to guarantee bank deposits, we now feel that there is practically no danger whatever of a depositor losing funds by reason of a bank failure.

During the dark, deep, depression years, the "Dirty Thirties" we were constantly faced with real problems. A bank must protect itself against losses in making loans, and thus protect the funds that depositors place in the bank under the fullest confidence. Yet a bank should assume some risks in helping new businesses and new families to get started.

I well remember the day before the First National Bank across the street, was not to open. Its directors had decided that it could no longer meet the requirements and demands of the National Bank Examiners. So naturally, we were very fearful and much concerned as to what would be the reaction of the public when the First National did not open in the morning. We felt that we should make all possible

preparations to meet demands of our own depositors whc might be concerned because of failure of the First National. I made a special trip that night alone in my car, to Goodland and obtained $4,000.00 in currency cash, and brought it back to our bank that night, as an addition to the cash reserve the bank usually carries.

However, our depositors were very loyal. Very, very few asked to have their money back the next day, or in the following days. Both our bank and the Citizens State were able to meet any and all demands that were made for withdrawals.

I well remember another time, when we were having discussions with the Kansas State Banking Department as to the financial condition of our bank. I made a special trip to Topeka, taking some photographs of certain properties, etc., and in a session with the State Bank Commissioner and his deputies, was able to convince them that we should continue open for business, riding close to the margin of solvency.

During the extremely prosperous times of World War I, and immediately after, great expansion was occurring in many agricultural areas and many, many new banks were chartered and opened up. In some areas the result was a bank for about each 500 of the general population. The national average ran around 5000 or more population for each bank. Hence in the depression years of the early "Thirties", about one-third of the chartered banks of the nation were closed out.

Fifty years is a long time to stay with one line of business. In my own case, I have been prone to take up many different lines of professional work. I always seemed to be changing from one work to another, about the time I began to really understand whatever I was in. I guess it is another manifestation of lack of stick-to-itiveness, that has switched me about so much. I am really proud to have remained closely associated with the banking profession. I cannot point to any great accomplishments as a banker, but

the associations with others has been very congenial and inspiring.

Some folks thought that banks are an economic load on the community; something that cost the community to maintain. With the closing of approximately one-third of all the banks during the depression, many smaller communities found themselves without a bank, and now they realize what a benefit a bank is.

SCHOOL TEACHING

Since school teaching was about the only professional

1914-1915--Robert Cram, Teacher allows his Sophmore class to pull a prank on him. In top row left to right are: Cecil (Burnham) Kelley; Leland Sturm; Lillie Gillespie; and John Harkins. Front row left to right are: Theda (Crosby) Denison; Ruth (Coriel) White; Alice Hawley; Esther Mitchell; Lottie (Drury) Ewing; Deroy Danielson, Jr.; and Robert Cram.

work available in this area many persons turned to it as a stepping stone to other work. I first took a country school at $30.00 per month, for a four month term, beginning in January, 1903. I did not become 16 until March 22 of that year. The school had 21 pupils, three of them older than I. They were a fine bunch of country kids, but I was lacking in discipline; hence the term did not amount to very much. I followed with three other country school terms in other schools, and the scholars made about average accomplishment in their school work. I obtained board and room with a family in the district in each case, at $2.25 to $2.50 per week. My teaching certificate was a third grade certificate, obtained by examination from the County Superintendent.

After I passed the County Common School examination, and received a County Diploma certifying completion of eight grades of common schooling, I attended secondary schooling at McPherson College in McPherson, Kansas, graduating from that school in May, 1910 with a teacher's certificate in "Scientific Didactics". (I never knew just what that meant).

Armed with this, I applied for work with the School Board of Cheyenne County High School, located at St. Francis, and was employed for the term of 1910-1911. I interrupted school teaching the next school term, and devoted my time to automobile work. The next three school terms, I was back in the Cheyenne County High School as an instructor and assistant principal.

My term as County Superintendent of schools began in May, 1915 and continued to May, 1919. At that time there were some active country schools in about 60 districts, besides the elementary schools in St. Francis and in Bird City. Consolidation of school districts was beginning to be much discussed. Together with several interested parents in 12 country school districts in the Bird City area, we planned consolidation of all 12 districts, but up-

on submission to a vote, the cause was lost. In the early 1960's school unification began to receive interest again. The necessary State Legislation was passed, and the schools of Cheyenne County, became organized into two unified districts. The office of County Superintendent was abolished. Transporting the scholars from their homes to school and back, became a regular part of the school system, and the yellow colored school buses became a regular part of the highway during the school term. No doubt the schools are much better, and the instruction more thorough. But costs have not been reduced. As a member of the State Legislature in 1957 thru 1966, I had a hand in shaping school legislation.

IN THE KANSAS LEGISLATURE

In 1920, when Mr. L. E. Harrison and Mr. Wm. Lockwood, businessmen, personal friends of mine, and long standing, active members of the Republican Party, asked me to be the candidate for Representative for Cheyenne County in the State House of Representatives, I was pleased to accept their suggestion, and was nominated in the usual way, and then elected at the Regular November General Election. The Democratic Party nominated Mr. Frank Overturf of Bird City as their candidate (close personal friend of mine). I was Cashier of the Farmers State Bank at Wheeler at the time. Mr. J. E. Uplinger, long time businessman of St. Francis, had been the Representative for the previous eight years. He always had been a staunch Democrat, but had the support of the Republicans of the County as well. But he decided to not hold the office any longer. No very spirited campaign was held between Mr. Overturf and myself, although there was something of an issue concerning the tax support of the Bird City Rural High School.

I was elected, and served for the 90 day term of 1921. At that time, the state constitution provided that Legislators

be paid $3.00 per day, plus mileage at 15¢ a mile for going to the State Capitol and returning at the end of the 90 day session. The Legislature voted to each member an allowance of $75.00 for the session, supposedly for postage and telegrams, etc. It took many years before the voters of the state passed an amendment, which allowed $5.00 per day for each member. Later further amendments provided for some small increase in pay and expense allowance. Finally about 1960, an amendment was adopted which gave the Legislature full authority to provide whatever pay the Legislature saw fit to award for salary and expenses. The recent pay scale is at $10.00 a day salary and $25.00 a day for living expenses. An amendment was adopted in 1955, providing for a regular session in each odd numbered year, not to exceed 90 days in duration, and a Budget Session not to exceed 30 days, in each even numbered year.

One can readily see that being a member of the Legislature has not been particularly rewarding financially. In fact it has always cost each Legislator much more than the pay, as well as the loss of time, living expenses and costs of transportation. However, the experience and the associations and acquaintance one gains by being a member of the Legislature is not to be measured in mere dollars and cents. Of course some legislators have cashed in on their influence and power, not in direct pay, but indirectly in their business; especially those in the practice of law, and in some businesses.

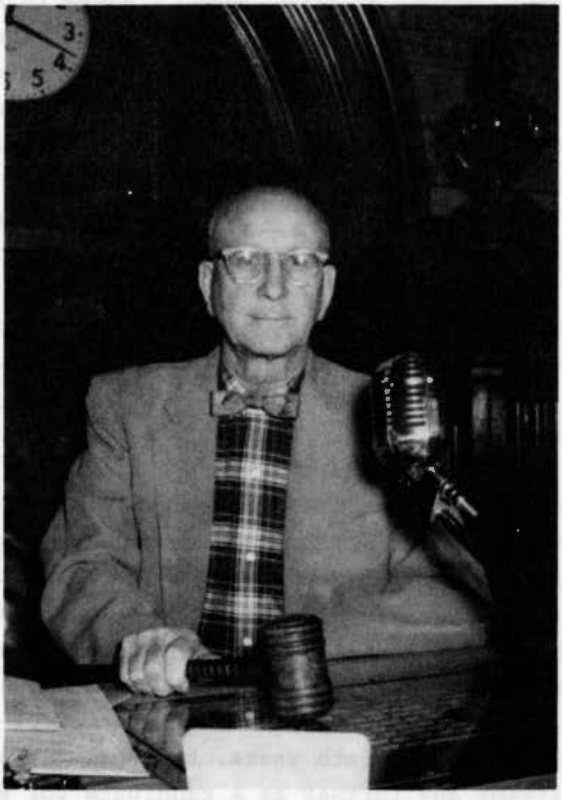
During my first term in 1921, I had an inferiority complex and it was really painful. My maturity and previous experience did not fit me to be a legislator. However, there were many others in the same fix. The management of the business of the Legislature and the State, as directed by the appropriations and appointments of various heads of state offices and bureaus and commissions, has always been handled by Legislators who have been on the job a few years, and who have legislative ability and personality

for the work. During my first term, I asked to be appointed to the Banking, the Schools, the State Institutions, committees, one or two other unimportant committees. In each committee, although one was not qualified to handle, manage, and present legislative matters, one could exercise some measure of judgment in voting.

As a result of my term in the 1920 State Legislature, I could see that it might be worthwhile for me, if I could become an attorney at law and be admitted to the Kansas Bar. (A large section of the Representatives and Senators were practicing lawyers.) I registered in the law office, Mr. L. D. Dowling and studied law. After three years, one could take the bar examination, and on passing it successfully, be admitted to practice law in all Kansas Courts. I was fortunate to pass the bar examination in February, 1924.

I became a candidate for re-election as State Representative in the general election of 1922, and again in 1924. But quite a severe recession had set in upon the rural areas. The farmers were losing much of the gains they had made during the World War I years. Therefore, quite a resentment against bankers took hold in the minds of the voters, and I lost in both years, to local farmers. I have given up trying any further as a candidate for Representative.

However, during the election of 1956, some of my Republican friends again insisted that I become a candidate for State Representative. They carried petitions for me, and I was elected at the general election, and again in the years 1958, 1960, 1962 and 1964, making a total if I include the session of 1921, 12 years as State Representative. It was quite an interesting experience to appear at the opening of the 1957 session of the Legislature, as a former member of some 36 years in the past. None of the older and former members remained in the House. But I was accorded all the special privileges that are afforded to former members. (Selection of seat, etc.)



About 1966--Robert Cram, Legislator, Kansas House of Representatives.

Mr. Jess Taylor of Tribune in Greeley County was selected to be Speaker of the House. I supported him and found a lasting and enjoyable friendship with him. At the opening of the 1959 session, Mr. Taylor again became a candidate for Speaker. No person had ever been Speaker for two successive terms. I made his nominating speech in the Party caucus, and he was elected.

The Speaker appointed the committees. Each member asks for the committee appointments he would like to have. I was automatically a member of the Judiciary Committee because

a rule states that all members of the bar, are members of this committee. I was also appointed on the Bankers Committee, the Agriculture Committee, and Rules Committee, Avaition, and Counties and County lines committees.

At the next Session, I was appointed to the same committees, but was named chairman of the Rules Committee, serving as such for the following three terms. At the Third Session, beginning in 1961, I was appointed Chairman of the Banking Committee, and served the two following terms. Considerable power, influence, and privilege is given to the chairman of a committee.

During my time as a Legislator, I did not attempt to formulate and introduce new legislation. But there were many and varied proposals for new legislation. Much of it far too revolutionary and some of it actually incompetent. Perhaps the legislation causing the greatest change during this time was that concerning the Educational System and the organization of the School Districts. A system of Unified School districts was finally brought about, resulting in a vast reduction of the number of small districts, which were unified into a comparatively few larger districts.

This was not brought about without great strife and struggle, court actions and counter actions. I believe the struggle is not quite over even yet. But undoubtedly, the students in general have an enormously better type of schooling. The cost has not been reduced, but the quality of schooling and teaching has been greatly improved.

Vast changes have been implemented in the state taxation laws, and the manner of assessing properties for taxation purposes as well as classifying property to be taxed. An entirely new Commercial Code, a new Criminal Code, and a new Civil procedure Code has been set up and ennacted into law. New Civil Rights legislation has been created and minority parties have benefited. Labor legislation, in-

toxicating liquor control, and drug sale control has received much discussion and legislation.

One could make quite a long discussion of the activities and work and effects of the LOBBY, which is made up of several hundred persons who attend the sessions of the Legislature to furnish entertainment, information and arguement to the Legislators, and really does have a vast effect on the final passage of legislation. In my own personal experience, I have never known of any actual payment of money to influence a legislator's vote on pending legislation. (I have heard old timers of the Topeka State House, say that many, many years ago, when National Senators were appointed by the State Senate, much real money changed hands for preference in such selection.) But in many, many other ways, great effort is made to influence the passage or non-passage of proposed legislation. And of course in a Democratic form of government such as ours, all segments of the population have a right to petition their legislators for suggested legislation, or to oppose it, and to present the arguments for or against.

Another interesting feature of my legislative experience was that my family made many visits during the sessions. Most of the grandchildren acted as pages for two or three days, thus getting a closer insight into the legislative program, and my wife was employed as a desk clerk, as were many, many other wives of legislators.

LAW PRACTICE

The law of Kansas provided, that in addition to taking a regular law course at college, one must register with a lawyer, be around the law office, assist as suitable, and be associated with law cases and law practice for three years before one could take the bar examination. In 1924, I took the bar examination which consisted of some two days of answering written questions, and holding some interviews

with the board of examiners appointed by the State Supreme Court. My knowledge was very limited, but the board passed me, and I was sworn in as an attorney at law by the Chief Justice of the Kansas Supreme Court. My work was the general daily work of the Cheyenne County State Bank. However, Mr. Kite, then the leading attorney of the county, offered me a chance to become associated with him in his law practice. That would have required my leaving the bank; hence I did not accept.[12]

My first law cases were minor cases in Justice of the Peace Court. Later I was employed by some of the mortgage

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[12]Mr. Cram is referring to Edward Everett Kite, prominent attorney and later District Judge of the 17th Judicial District. A graduate of the University of Missouri Law School in 1907, Mr. Kite moved to Cheyenne County where he began practicing law. Two years later he was elected County Attorney, an office he held from 1909-1917. He returned to his law practice and served as chairman of the Questionnaire Board charged with administering loyalty oaths to Americans of various nationalities during the World War I. In 1927 he was elected District Judge of the 17th Judicial District. He remained in this capacity for twenty years until 1947. During his tenure he participated in the creation of legal reform and inovation as he became one of the first district judges to institute pre-trial conferences. These conferences produced great savings in time and money as many cases were settled by arbitration and dispensing with or shortening jury sessions. These conferences also tended to promote more amicable feeling between litigants. After stepping down as District Judge Mr. Kite once again resumed his law practice which he continued until his death in 1956. Mr. Kite's hobby was big game hunting. Like Mr. Cram, Mr. Kite was a member of the community's elite leadership, and as such he also seemed to realize the value of belonging to clubs and voluntary associations. A typical American joiner Mr. Kite held membership in the Kansas Bar Association; the American Bar Association; the Northwest Kansas Bar Association; the Masons (32°); the Odd Fellows (7°); the Order of Eastern Star; the Rotary Club; and the Christian Church. See Sara and Robert M. Baldwin, (eds.), Biographical Sketches of Kansas Men and Women of Achievement (Hebron, Nebraska, 1933), 648; James C. Fifield, (ed.), The American Bar: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Lawyers of the U.S. and Canada (Minneapolis, 1926), 354; Woman's Day Kansas Club, (comp.), Lawyers Through the Years, 1 (January 26, 1963), 61; The National Encyclopedia of American Biography, 48 (New York, 1965), 488.

companies to foreclose on loans on lands in this county and adjoining counties. Many loans became delinquent, as the country drifted toward a general depression. I also began to handle estate matters, and examine real estate titles.

I was elected County Attorney in the general election of 1932, for six years. As such I had to represent the county in its efforts to prosecute criminal matters. Violations of the liquor prohibition laws were the most common. But larceny, assault, and battery cases also arose now and then. In many cases, the defendant would plead guilty hoping the judge would grant a parole, which he often did.

I was not well enough grounded in the law to be a force in trial work. But I handled several cases before juries with modest success. One time, a defendant was charged with stealing wheat. The jury found him not guilty. But later in the hall, one of the jurymen, in talking with the defendant, told him "We let you off this time, but you better be mighty careful not to do it again!"

I handled many estates during my law career, some of them very small of practically no value, and some of net value of several hundred thousand dollars. My fees were not usually very high. I received one fee of $10,000.00 for an estate by acting as both Executor and Attorney. In one estate, farm machinery agency, the assets were only large enough to obtain three cents on the dollar for the general claimants.

I was often consulted for advice in some legal matter. In one case Mr. S had died, leaving some estate. His second wife, was the beneficiary of his will. He had erected a very large, handsome and prominent tombstone for his first wife, in a country cemetery, expecting that he would also be buried in the same grave. But he lived to marry a second time. Now the widow, being his second wife, wanted to know if she could take that fine fancy tombstone, and move it to another cemetery, to use it for her deceased husband and eventually for herself. In matters like this, the rules of

the Cemetery Association apply, and the result was that she could not move the tombstone.

Law practice requires a most personal and confidential relationship between attorney and client. The law recognizes and protects this relationship. During my law practice, I have had many occasions where the client disclosed the most intimate of personal matters, asking my help and advice. In many pending divorce cases, I made an effort to reconcile the parties and in some cases, the next thing I knew, the client had employed a different attorney and filed a divorce petition, asking for stringent decisions against the other party. The matter of caring for young infants and children always presents some heart rending situation. In one case, a motherless infant had been raised by an uncle and his wife, until the child, a girl, was six or seven years old. Then the real father claimed possession. But the relative family which had cared for the child thus far, would not willingly release it. Settling the case, after it had been through court to judgment, fell to me, personally. I had to go to the home, pick up the screaming child and take it to her legal father. It subsequently turned out that this real father did give the child good care, and she became a normal young lady.

Some clients told me their most minute details of imitimate family relationships. Criminal law, as well as corporate and property and political law, all present special fields. It appears more and more that less disputes will be handled in courts under law procedure, then will be handled on the basis of a board or commission management basis.

I never completely retired from law practice, in 1971, I have eight estate matters in my charge. I was gratified,

that Paul Rose,[13] named me in his will as executor to serve without bond. The estate is worth well over $100,000.

Something compels me to close with the old story of the Irishman, looking about in an old cemetery. He came upon a tombstone, bearing the inscription, "Here lies good old Joe Doaks, an honest man and a lawyer." The Irishman commented: "Sure, and why did they bury two men in the same grave?"

CHURCH

My earliest recollections of church began with Emporia. Mother was a church member and saw to it that we children attended. I think it was the Methodist Church, but am not certain. I remember one Christmas program at the church, and a large decorated Christmas Tree. I believe that father was not especially interested in church attendance. When we came to Cheyenne County and located on the farm, some five or six miles out from town, we still took part as members of the Methodist Church in Bird City. I remember the preacher stopping at our house and staying the night with us. In those days the various Sunday schools of the county held an annual Sunday School Convention, an all day affair, with basket dinner. After 1900, we moved to a farm only three miles from town. From then on, we attended church and Sunday school quite regularly.

When I was attending school at McPherson College, I went to church and Sunday School regularly as did most of the students. Services were held in the College Chapel, and occasionally revival services were given. I did not

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[13]Paul Rose was a farmer who lived in the northwestern part of Cheyenne County. Born in 1893 he lived simply and was somewhat of a loner who never married. He left most of his property to the American Lutheran Synod.

become a member, although considerable pressure was applied to all of the students to do so. As a visitor, I attended the regular foot washing services held by the Brethern or Dunkard Church. The members were seated at long tables, with the men separate from the women. A supper was served, and then a tub of water was passed along the floor on each side. In turn the members washed each other's feet, and dried them with suitable towels. In accordance with Scripture reading, they sang a hymn and adjourned or went outside as it was just turning dark. The members believed that they had fulfilled the admonition of the Scriptures.

After our marriage in June, 1914, my wife and I attended the Methodist Church, but did not become members until a revival was held a year later, then we joined. Our membership has continued ever since. But I did not take active part in church work. I never thought of being in the choir for many years. Sometime in the late 20's, Mr. Lockwood, the choir leader asked me to join and I did. I attended the choir's regular weekly practices and participated in choir work regularly for many, many years. I did not contribute very much to the melody, but those standing by me often said that I "was reliable as a person to stand next to, meaning as to time etc."

In the later 20's I was elected to the Official Board, which meant I was to help with raising the necessary finances to keep the church operating. Some of the time, I was Secretary and treasurer of the Sunday School and of the Church Board. During the depression of the 30's, church finances were very much of a struggle. Usually, with some special effort towards the end of the conference year, we managed to scrape up enough to send the preacher to conference with finances in fairly good shape.

In 1918 and 1919, a new church structure was erected, and financed without too much struggle. Then in 1921 and 1922, an extra large parsonage was constructed. The preacher and two or three of the influential men on the Official

Board, without sufficient contact with the rest of the Board, changed the plans of the parsonage to greatly enlarge it. The net result, was a debt of several thousand dollars, which hung over the Church for several years. The bank carried the loan, because it was signed by 10 or 15 of the active members of the Church. Sometimes the note would be shifted to a Bank at Norton, [14] so that the payment of the note at the local bank would show as clear. During this time, concrete paving was installed on two sides of the church building lot, and special assessment taxes of several thousand dollars accumulation were levied for that expense, the taxes going delinquent for several years. With return of local prosperity in the early 40's, eventually all of the church obligations were paid up in full.

About 1960, another building program was undertaken for constructing an Educational Building, so that there would be room for the Sunday School classes, an office for the pastor, and a chapel for small group services. The cost ran around $75,000. Pledges were solicited, and after some delay, the building debt balance was finally cleared up in 1969.

The Church never was any great and compelling force in our family. As the boys grew up, we attended Sunday School and church services most of the time. But we never made any issue of attending. Each was free to attend or not, as he felt. It has been a most wonderful pleasure to me to find that all three sons and their families have taken hold of church work and devoted the time, attention and support that they have. Their various children seem to be slanted the same way. I have never personally been a rabid church zealot. The spiritual side of religion has never appealed to me greatly. I do realize, that for many persons, there must be a spiritual side, and some sort of physical and objective side to their religion, such as church cermonies and decorations. Why do churches have

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[14] Norton is approximately 105 miles east of St. Francis.

steeples? Why do many church activites depend upon objects for the physical eye to see and feel and to "place" adoration. I do not take too much stock in the theory and philosophy as expressed by the fellow who says, "religion doesn't change a man's nature." I realize that there are those who are like the old deacon and the profane but kind old man. Each swears unmercifully, but neither the deacon with his prayers or the profane old man with cuss words, really means anything!!!

One time a local precher friend actually prevailed upon me to go out to his country church and hold church services in his place, while he was away. I held the services, a small collection was taken up, and some hymns sung. I made a semi-religious talk, but not too long. The small congregation was probably just as well off, as if the regular preacher had been there.

During my childhood in Emporia, I remember Sunday School had church services. When we first came to Cheyenne County, we lived about six miles from town, and church attendance was not easy. But mother was a devout Methodist, and we attended as much as possible. Father never made any profession of religious conviction or church membership, but he subscribed to the general teachings of the church as to morality, general conduct, and treatment of neighbors. Mother taught us to pray, "Now I lay me down to sleep, et al".

In 1915 after Elizabeth and I had been married a year or so, we both decided to place our membership in the Methodist Church at St. Francis. This membership continued to the time of her passing, and to the present for myself. We contributed sparingly to the church budget. As time went on the members placed me on the board of stewards, and eventually I became the treasurer and handled the church funds. I was also secretary and treasurer of the Sunday School for many years, depositing the collections in the bank account, and purchasing the supplies. I tried teaching a

Sunday School class but must say that I was not a shining success at that. My chief Sunday School activity for many years, was playing Santa Claus for the annual Christmas program.

The teachings of the church concerning honesty, morality, obedience to law, charity for neighbors and others and fairness in dealings with others, has appealed to me more than has the emotional or spiritual side of religion. The ceremonies of the church have not been of much appeal to me. I have always thought that an active church, whatever the denomination, is an economic asset to any community. I do not agree with many of the extremists of present times, who hold that the traditions and morality of the church, are merely chains which bind the subjects to an improper domination of the upper classes of society! I believe that these so called "traditions of morality" have been built up and acquired by mankind during his long struggle upwards from savagery. They should be retained, or mankind will eventually go thru the long weary process again! No doubt the extreme liberals and advanced thinkers of Sodom and Gomorrah, thought they were achieving liberation for the masses of that society, but in reality they destroyed a grand civilization!

The Evangelical United Brethern Chruch in America was organized many years ago; mostly by devout persons in Pennsylvania, very much on the same principles of the Methodist Episcopal Church, organized by the Wesleys of England and the United States. About the only difference in the two church bodies, was the fact that the E.U.B. church was originally made up of German speaking members.

A great many German speaking people came to Cheyenne County about 1900. They naturally organized a congregation of the E.U.B. They built a church and a parsonage, some six or seven miles northwest of St. Francis. But as time went on, many of the members came to live in town, retiring from farm work and turning the farms over to the youngsters.

Eventually, they decided to move the church building into town. About 1960 they erected a brand new church, costing upwards of $150,000 or so. A congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church organized and built a church and parsonage in the city. About 1919 or 1920, they rebuilt the church in a very modern way. A very impressive front and set of steps leading up to the elevated main floor distinguished the structure. In due time, the Benkelman family contributed a fine pipe organ. About 1960, a very fine Educational Building was added, costing upwards of $95,000 to $100,000.

In the meantime, a national movement got underway to unite the Methodist and the E.U.B. church organizations. The various annual conferences studied the matter, and eventually, a union was brought about. This was about 1967. The two congregations in St. Francis became a part of the overall United Methodist Church. The E.U.B. congregation took the name Calvary United Methodist Church, and the former Methodist Church took the name, Wesley United Methodist Church. Both belonged to the same United Methodist Church.

Due to shortage of preachers only one preacher was assigned to St. Francis. He was pastor for both congregations, holding a service in each church on Sunday, one following the other. Soon agitation began to consolidate the two congregations. This was accomplished in 1971. The new charter represented one congregation. The uniting congregations were dissolved. All church property and church debts were merged into the new consolidated congregation.

Naturally there were many in each congregation who did not approve of the consolidation. It meant abandoning one of the church sanctuaries. It also raised the question of what to do with the pipe organ, if the older Methodist Church building was the one to be abandoned. I was asked to handle the legal work of preparing the necessary papers for the consolidation. Each congregation held a special meeting to vote upon the proposed consolidation. Each held

a separate meeting, and voted on the matter. The meetings were supervised by the District Superintendent, Mr. Charles Curtis. A simple majority voted in favor of the consolidation at each special meeting. But a majority of the members of each congregation was not present. My advice all along had been that state law required a 2/3 affirmative vote of all the members of each congregation. However, the votes were reported to the State Secretary of State, together with the application for consolidation. After considerable investigation and study by the Attorney for the Secretary of State, it was decided to accept the proceedings as submitted. The new Consolidation Charter was issued, a certified copy was sent to the Administrative Boards in St. Francis and was placed in the office of the Register of Deeds of Cheyenne County, Kansas.

As of June, 1971, consolidation appears to be complete.

ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1918

November 11, 1970, fifty-eight years since that memorable day November 11, 1918. I well remember that day fifty-eight years ago. Today is a similar day. Clear, quiet, somewhat cool, the therometer hit about 30 last night. Our schools were closed temporarily on account of the flu epidemic. Many of our fine young men were away in the military service. Many had already lost their lives in the terrible struggle of World War I. But locally, business was carried on as usual. The farmers had good crops, and prices were good. Much building and improvement was going on. The city streets had not yet been paved, but were simply sandy surfaced. Many farmers, business, and professional men had automobiles, but not in the superabundance we now have.

Early that morning, I loaded up my service truck and drove to the William Anderson farm, located some five or more miles southeast of Bird City, where I was installing a

farm electric plant, a Delco-Light Plant. I took Professor Dowling of the high school along to help with the work. He was glad to be doing something constructive as school was closed. About mid-morning word was sent by phone, that the armistice hadbeen signed, that the war was over and that plans were being carried out to have a grand celebration at St. Francis. There was to be a big barbeque and everyone was invited. Mr. Dowling and I immediately dropped our tools, and drove back to St. Francis.

The streets were already full of people, happy, excited, greatful that the terrible war was ended, and the boys would be coming home soon. The barbeque committee obtained a fatted beef animal, and started the barbeque process. About mid-afternoon, the barbeque meat was ready. The pit was opened, and serving began. We had no count of the people who went thru the line, but it must have been two or three thousand. There were no speeches, but everyone was surely in a holiday spirit. The war to end all wars was now ended. This was the war that President Wilson was elected in 1916, to keep us out of.

I had not been called into military service, but was registered. With a family, I was among the deferred registrants. However had the war continued much longer. I would have been called. Many of my closest friends had gone to the military service, either by volunteering or by being called. Many of them did not return. The great tragedy is that mankind has not yet learned the lesson of eternal peace. How to get along with his fellow man.

Fifty-eight years ago, mankind had made amazing progress and accomplishments and developed wonderful techniques controlling the forces of nature. In the years that have elapsed since mankind has continued to invent and develop truly amazing processes. But he still has not learned the lesson of peace and harmony with his fellow men. His inhumanity to man is still with him. He still works feverishly towards plans and methods of annihilating

his fellow men, and causing them untold pain and suffering. In the name of patriotism, unfortunate individuals are caught, beaten, stoned, flayed alive, imprisoned and starved slowly to death, traitors to the common national cause, tortured, strangled, torn and twisted, legs and arms pulled apart on the rack. As late as 200 years ago in our own eastern american colonies some women were convicted of being witches unmercifully mistreated and even burned to death.

OF BOOKS, READING, WRITING, PLAYS, MUSIC, PROHIBITION AND BECOMING A NUMBER

As far as I can remember, we always had books in the home. We became familiar with Black Beauty, Pilgrims Progress, Robinson Crusoe, the Mother Goose Tales and rhymes, and Bibles with colored pictures.[15] Grandfather Cram, being an old soldier of the Civil War, always took the Washington Tribune, which catered to old soldiers. (It was their national newspaper.) Among other features I remember the "Adventures of Si Klegg" awkward, gawky fellow from the hills trying to be a good soldier. Each issue of the weekly newspaper featured an amusing incident of Si Klegg.

Before her marriage mother had taught school in Iowa. She took care to see that we had more or less book schooling in the home. It was a family custom that she would read to us in the evenings, before we children, were able to read for ourselves. Father was not able to read fluently at all, but he could write and figure sums to such extent as necessary in his daily farm and shop dealings.

In our pioneer days on the farm in Cheyenne County, there was not much formal entertainment. The schools, the general community interest, the Sunday School, and Church furnished some

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[15] Black Beauty was written by Anna Sewell; Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe; and Pilgrim's Progress by Paul Bunyan.

entertainment. One specially enjoyable neighborhood feature was the old fashioned "Literary Society." Usually there was such going on during the winter months in each community. The neighbors and children would gather at the school house, and a program would be enjoyed by all. A committee for next session would be appointed, and this committee would be responsible for the next program. Pieces were learned and spoken by the very smallest children on up thru the older and more advanced folks. Often a debate would be planned; usually someone was assigned to write the "Paper". This was a take off on a regular newspaper, and would contain jokes, silly advertisements, and neighborhood reports. Singing was a part of the program. Occasionally a play would be planned, characters would be assigned the parts, and the play would be performed by the players. Mother was good at finding suitable pieces for us to learn and speak, also she gave us some training in public speaking, gestures etc.

Of course there was no T.V., phonographs, or movie theaters during those early days, just before the turn of the century. I remember well our very first phonograph. It played from a small wax disc, and had a small tin horn, perhaps a foot long. The records were uproarously funny, sometimes, and of course "tinny in sound". Soon after 1900 came the community telephone. That furnished a great deal of entertainment at first. Music might be played and the several telephones which were on the "Party Line" would all be turned on, for mutual enjoyment. I remember one standard joke, in which some well known wag of the community would be cautioned, over the phone, to hang up, because his feet smelled, even over the phone!!!

The fiddle was a common instrument in many homes, and of course the neighborhood dance was common. Some folks participated, and some did not, holding that dancing was immoral. But the young folks at parties could take part in such activites as Skip To My Lou, and All Go Down to Rouswers, or Chicken Reel, in which a lot of swinging of the gals and holding

hands would be a part of the game. The old fashioned reed organ was quite common in homes and church and school. After 1900, the piano became more and more common. Mother had a reed organ in our home, and played and sang with it at occasional festival times. We obtained a piano, soon after 1900, and the kids took piano lessons from time to time.

Since my early school days, I have very much enjoyed reading books. Usually, I had a book or so on hand for reading most of the time. I have no idea how many books I read, but it would be in the thousands, I am sure.

Of course I read a lot of Shakespere, but always found it very difficult to read a Shakespere play right thru. In my graduation exercises at McPherson College, in 1910, the graduating class put on the play, "Merchant of Venice." I was the character of Shylock, the jew. I most villianously demanded my "Pound of Flesh."

It was a very important event in my young life when I bought a sectional book case, four shelf size. I still have the case, jammed full of books, old and new, but of course many other books are scattered about the place. I have donated many to libraries. Books have always been a suitable item for gift occasions among the family.

I studied the German Language at college to be able to read the simpler German pamphlets and stories. It is a genuine pleasure to read in another language. Immensee and William Tell are two works that are specially interesting.[16] During my teaching in the Cheyenne County High School, they assigned German to me. It was recognized that some proficiancy in the German language had a real economic value in this area, as there were so many German speaking immigrants in the early years of development here. Our German Department in high school gave a whole evening play in German one time, using

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[16]Theodor Storm wrote Immensee. William Tell is a play by Frederick von Schiller.

the theater downtown. While many of the audience could not understand the words, they got the gist of the action.

Of course the Holy Bible was read by me to quite an extent. I found some passages which might even now, be considered pornographic; yet because it appeared in the Holy Scriptures, it was considered okay. But my first real shock at the turn of language that has come upon us in recent years came when I read "Grapes of Wrath" by Steinbeck. The book created quite a national sensation. It is a story of poor Oklahoma families, forced to leave their farms by the dust bowl weather and low farm prices. But the author started out early in the book by using language and naming items, that I had always heretofore considered not proper for use in polite society at all. I must say that I find myself completely out of adjustment to this extremely modernistic form of language in books, magazine articles, plays of stage, movie and T.V. I am shocked beyond measure. I specially warn you, against tackling "Godfather", which seems to be about the worst of the latest.

Music activities have been a real genuine satisfaction to me. Most all the grandchildren worked with music in various forms, mostly with piano and organ, but also with band instruments, drums, and horns. We obtained a new Baldwin grand piano during the thirties (cost $800.00) and this was a great satisfaction to the wife and the boys and myself. At this writing in 1970, we are sadly chagrined and pained and saddened by the turn modern music has taken. We do not dig the rock and roll stuff.

I grew up when Prohibition of Alcoholic drink was much in the public eye. The evils of strong drink and the saloon, and attendant associations, were argued most forcefully. I was a firm believer in Prohibition, and was sure that prohibiting alcohol use as a social or other use, was much to be desired. My state of Kansas, early joined the ranks of states prohibiting alcoholic drinks, the law even going all the way to prohibiting even the possession, sale, or giving

away of alcoholic drinks. Then came National Prohibition, by U.S. Constitutional Amendment, about the year 1921. However, many evils followed, bootlegging and consequent evils and law breaking, and law violation became so violent, that a reaction set in, and in the 1930's, prohibition laws were repealed. Even in Kansas. Although I know that a great many fine people do make a moderate use of alcoholic drinking yet it seems to me that in general, alcoholic beverages are a great curse to a nation.

Besides my social security number I also have many many other numbers. My conclusion is, that if the American Way of Life continues in the same general direction of the course it seems upon at this time, I will eventually be fed into a computer, and after due digestion, will be spewed out with another number or series of numbers, which will fully control everything from then on.

TRIPS AND TRAVELS

Going places and seeing things and people have always been among the grand pleasures of life for me, especially if others are along to join in the sight-seeing. The first such trip was with my folks when they visited Florida in the winter of 1896-1897, when I was about 10 years of age. Of course we travelled by railroad train. Palm Beach was already well started as a winter resort, but the rest of the area where my mother's folks had located was totally primitive and undeveloped. There were scarcely any roads. Folks lived near the lakeshore and most travel was by boat. They even went from their dwellings by boat to their gardens and truck farms. The new railroad had just been built along the East Coast by the homes of the folks.

After harvest, in the summer of 1911, I took a load of four passengers on a sight-seeing trip to Colorado Springs, Manitou, the Garden of the Gods, then to Denver, then back home.

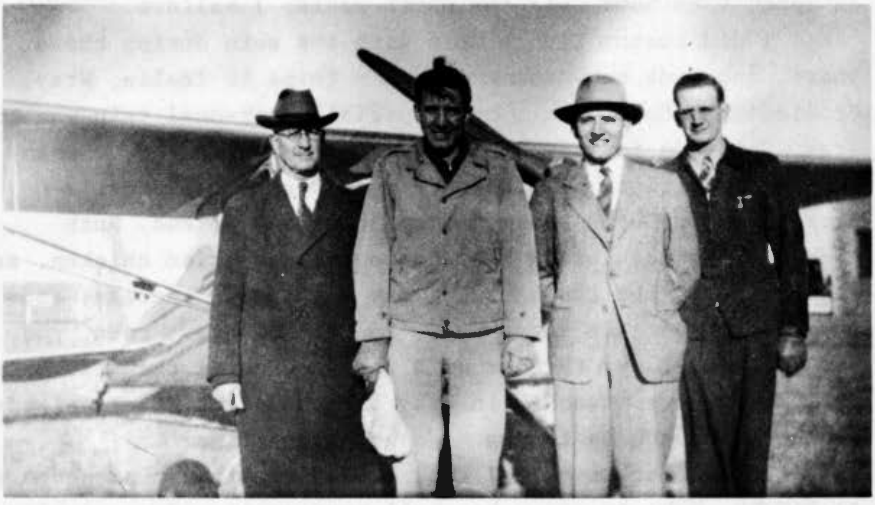
In the summer of 1912, Ward Smull, his cousin, and Harry Harrison, rode with me for two weeks in the mountains, camping out at Green Mountain a few days, climbing Pikes Peak on foot, then home, via the north route, I believe.

I did custom livery work with the auto during those years, and made many commercial men trips to Idalia, Wray, Benkleman, McCook, etc. One especially personal trip was to Wray, Colorado for the 4th of July celebration. My company was my lady friend, Elizabeth Ringo, Ward Smull, Hollis Harrison, and Dutch Benkelman and his lady friend, Ruth Lockwood. We took along a suitcase full of fried chicken, as a surprise to the ladies. The day was a huge success, and then it rained. In those days, in case of heavy rain, you did not travel any further with an auto, until the road dried up. So we were marooned in Wray for the night. But friends opened their houses for us. We got along fine.

Later that summer, I took a load of similar passengers to McCook, Neb. to see a baseball tournament and an airplane flight by Longren, a pioneer flyer of Topeka, Kansas. We saw the flight okay, but it rained again and we had to stay in McCook for the night, getting rooms at a hotel. Ward Smull and Arlie Danielson were the other men. My lady friend Elizabeth Ringo, Hollis Harrison, and Iva Danielson, were the ladies. The three ladies took a room together, I occupied an outer room and the two men had another room. It was quite a night. Ward and Arlie got into a friendly tussell with each other, nearly throwing each out of the window. I wonder often now days if unchaperoned young folks should make such trips, whether the woods would not resound with strong accusations that the young folks were fast going to the dogs.

Of course the most wonderful trip of all was the wedding tour, June 30, 1914. After the noon day wedding at the Ringo Home in the Country, my new wife and I set out in a new car that I managed to get hold of, and headed for Benkleman, Imperial, and ended up at Julesberg, Colorado. During the two weeks trips, we got to Denver, Colorado Springs, Pikes

Peak on west thru Cripple Creek and Canyon City, and eventually on home. During that trip, it also rained heavily some of the time.



About 1950--Robert Cram and his Three Sons: Ernest Richard; Ole Robert, Jr.; James Jacob with Robert's airplane, a Cessna 120. All four men were pilots and all flew this plane.

Robert Ellsworth, an attorney from Lawrence, Kansas, organized a business and professional mens trip to Russia, starting June 5, 1960. After two nights in Berlin, where we received excellent service and accommodations, we left East Berlin on a Soviet plane. West Berlin was highly prosperous, business was active, the people were active and full of energy and life. By contrast, in East Berlin, very little of the rubble of World War II had been cleared up. The people were sluggish, business was dull, no autos were on the streets. The dominance of the Russian Communist Party appeared to hinder all individual initiative and ambition of the common people.

The group which consisted of four attorneys, one school man, a banker, two business men, a radio-T.V. newsman, and a real estate dealer had six days in Moscow. The group was

greatly impressed with many of the actual accomplishments of the Russian people. But it was always depressing to us that all property belonged to the State, excepting personal belongings. The ruble at the time was equal to only 10¢; it took ten rubles to equal a dollar. All transactions had to be carried on in Russian money, except at authorized exchange spots, where American money could be changed to Russian, and vice versa. We were much impressed with the fact that Russia was gradually becoming more and more Capitalistic, adopting capitalistic practices. Socialism was the dominant system, but classes were developing, such as leaders in the Communist Party, scientists, skilled workers, technicians, and teachers.

We were greatly impressed with the most terrible effects of the massive invasion of Russia by the German armies of World War II. The resistance of the Russians was terrific and the Panzer divisions of Hitler were finally turned back. But the memory lingered on, and all Russian persons with whom we had any contacts at all, were deeply opposed to any more war. But through propaganda, they were still fearful of the United States as a world power.

This visit to Russia was actually one of the highlights of my life. I came back with a much better understanding of the workings of social change and revolution. It is needed in most all nations and among all people. But it can be brought about by more peaceful means. Organized society must always provide for some use of force and compulsion in order to stabilize the decrees of government, decrees that have been established by agreement and will of the great majority of mankind.

I HAVE BEEN A JOINER

My father was never a Mason, but he had seen enough of the activities and benefits of being a Mason, that he saw to it that as soon as I was of age, and the opportunity presented

itself, that I applied for membership. I formed the Masonic Lodge of McDonald, in 1909.[17] At St. Francis, in 1912 and 1913, nine Masons got together and applied for a charter for Lodge 404 A.F. & A.M. of Kansas. I was the secretary. Lodge 404 began in 1913. In 1921 I served as Master of the lodge. I recently received a "60 year pin" from this Lodge.

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[17]Masons or Freemasons were a bound order of men, originally deriving from the medieval fraternity of operative stone masons. In freemasonry there is no central authority. Instead it is divided into more than one hundred grand jurisdictions, each of which is autonomous. Somewhat democratic in nature, freemasonry admits men of every creed, political persuasion, and religion. The only qualifications, are that its members must believe in a Supreme Being, possess good moral character, and have a fair degree of intelligence. Although secret societies were generally frowned upon by early 19th century Americans, the Masons remained exempt from such criticism, perhaps because Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and other participants of the American Revolution were Masons. Indeed during the first quarter of the 19th century membership in a Masonic fraternity was almost a prerequisite for political preferment. But in 1826 public opinion dramatically changed with the mysterious disappearance in western New York of William Morgan, a Mason who was known to be preparing an exposé of his order's secrets. It is popularly believed, though never proved, that fellow Masons murdered Morgan. This sentiment produced the Anti-Masonic Party, which was the first third party on the American national political scene. Formed in 1828, it reflected widespread hostility toward Masons holding public office. The entrance of the Anti-Masonic Party into national politics in 1831 helped draw support from Henry Clay and thereby guarantee President Andrew Jackson, who was a Mason, reelection by a wide margin. After the elections of 1836, the Anti-Masonic Party declined. Together with the National Republican Party, it was eventually absorbed into the New Whig Party. See Jacob H. Tatsch, Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies (New York, 1929); Melvin M. Johnson, The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America (New York, 1924); Fred and Gilfred Knight, The Pocket History of Freemasonry (New York, 1953). The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is a secret, fraternal benefit society. The first Rotary Club was founded in Chicago in 1905 by Paul Harris, an attorney. The name derived from the weekly rotation of meetings from one office to another by members. Neither a secret nor a religious organization Rotary is devoted to the ideal of service in personal, business, and community life.

In 1912 I became a member of IOOF (International Order of Odd Fellows) of St. Francis, Kansas, #325. Later on I served as Noble Grand, which is the presiding officer.

Wife and I became members of the St. Francis Methodist Church in 1915, continued ever since.

I was a charter member of the St. Francis, Kansas Rotary Club, and was District Governor for the fiscal year, 1959-1960.

I have always been a member of the Republican Party. I was county chairman for about ten years. I helped elect Alf Landon, Governor of Kansas, but was not able to swing his election of 1932, when FDR ran against him.

Other organizations to which I belong or have belonged are:

Sons and Daughters of Kansas, Native,
St. Francis Methodist Church
Kansas State Historical Society
Cheyenne County Historical Society
Bird City Antique Thresher Association
Cheyenne County Farm Bureau
Kansas Flying Farmers
Kansas Flying Bankers
Local Golf Club, and now Riverside Recreation Club
Kansas Bar Association, and Northwest Kansas Bar Assoc.
Cheyenne County Teachers Association
St. Francis Chamber of Commerce
St. Francis Investment Club
Association of Retired Citizens
Masonic Affiliants, The Chapter, Knights Templar and Shrine
Civil Air Patrol (Lt and Pilot)

In our local Mason Lodge, the new officers are installed with an elaborate ceremony, each year, for the following year. In December, 1970, I was asked to be the installing officer and act as a representative of the Grand Lodge of the State for this purpose. I thus did the installing. It was noted

that exactly 50 years ago, I myself was installed as Master for this Lodge, for 1921.

MY ASSOCIATION WITH ROTARY

At St. Francis, sometime after World War I, various persons from adjoining towns, suggested to St. Francis business and professional men, that a Rotary Club be started. However, it was not until 1937 that Rotary District Governor Mueller of Dodge City, made a vigorous campaign to organize Rotary Clubs in his district of Western Kansas. He caused some 15 or more clubs to be organized. Among them was the Club at St. Francis. I was a charter member, along with about 20 other men. Charter night was held sometime in the Month of May, 1937, and the rotary club of Oberlin, Kansas was the club sponsor. Many members from that club attended the Charter Night festivities. I have taken a fairly active part in the activities of the club, such as program committee man, serving on social affair committees, and serving as secretary, and president. The St. Francis Club has continued with active weekly meetings ever since the organization. A few weeks during World War II, it was very difficult to find a suitable meeting place and someone to serve lunch.

At the District Conference at Norton, May, 1959, I was elected District Governor. Wife and I attended the International Rotary Assembly at Lake Placid, NY, and then the International convention in New York, immediately following. Needless to say, all this was a very rich and rewarding experience, at the Lake Placid assembly, some 800 persons, from all over the world, met for a week of indoctrination in Rotary Fellowship and Activities.

As District Governor, I then visited every club in this district, there being 36 clubs. The area reached south as far as Sharon Springs and Tribune, and east as far as Washington and Herrington. At each club visit, the Governor meets with the administrative officers of the club, attends a

regular meeting of the club, and makes a Governor's Address, something along the lines of Rotary. We held the Annual Rotary District Conference, at Salina, and the host club did a most splendid job.

I have attended many other district, state, and international rotary meetings. I have visited many, many other clubs at the regular luncheon meeting. The associations have been a source of great pleasure.

Rotary is one of the perculiarly great service organizations of modern times. It was first organized in Chicago in 1905. It now has become world wide and has over 14,000 clubs, and upwards of 750,000 or more members. It has been a mighty force for promotion of better understanding and feeling between business and professional men, and between nations. However the "Iron Curtain" countries prohibit Rotary Clubs. Organized clubs exist in more than 140 countries or nations. Being District Governor is one of the highlights of my life. I was not able to put as much into Rotary as I wished, but it has been a very rich experience for me.

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

In school, church, lodge, law practice, politics, and other community activities, many close friends stand out in my appreciations and memories. I was Republican County Chairman at the time Alf Landon first ran for Governor of Kansas. I met him in the course of the campaign, and many, many times afterward. When he was a candidate for U.S. Presidency, in 1936, I was sure that I would wind up having a real acquaintanceship with a U.S. President. I could not think of such a thing as that he would not even carry his own state. I even bet a suit of clothes that Alf would carry Kansas, thinking I had a sure bet. But I had to go a bit skimpy on my own personal suits for a year or so, as a result of the election. Alf phoned me one day, some years after his terms as Governor, to inquire if I had any suitable lands for

sale out this way. He was interested in purchasing a few hundred acres, with a view to holding same against possible oil production development. I offered him a fine 320 acre tract at $35.00 an acre. He did not have time to come out here to see it personally. But his daughter Peggy a fine young lady then, was at Colby. He had her come over and view the land. I made a good showing of the land. But Alf did not buy. Within twenty years, that same land was worth $200.00 an acre. During my Legislative time in Topeka, I often had lunch with Alf, and I guess he actually enjoyed having me rib him about his lack of appreciation of a good land buy, when shown to him.[18]

In politics, I also became well acquainted with Senator Carlson, when he was a candidate for Representative to Congress, later when he was a candidate for Governor.[19]

During my 12 years of service in the Kansas Legislature I became well acquainted with many of the politicians of the State and state officers, attorneys and executives of Topeka and elsewhere about the state. Beginning with Charles Curtice, as Senator and Vice-President, I had fairly close acquaintances and friendships with the governors and National Senators and State Representatives in Congress. Thru Rotary, Church, lodge, business and law practice, there have been many, many close friendships built up.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

As a youngster, I had most of the usual childhood diseases; measles, whooping cough, scarletina,[20] etc. I remember in my

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[18]The most comprehensive biography of Landon is Donald McCoy, Landon of Kansas (Lincoln, 1966).

[19]This is Frank Carlson who in addition to serving six terms in Congress and two in the legislature was also elected governor of Kansas in 1946. For more information on Carlson, see John D. Bright, (ed.), Kansas: The First Century (New York, 1956), 466 ff.

[20]Scarlatina or Scarlet Fever is an acute, contagious respiratory infection characterized by sore throat, a diffuse

early teens, we were all vaccinated against small pox. The vaccination "Took" in fine shape and made a huge scab on my arm which was very sore for many days. I also had a considerable earache. Grandmother Rainey, who was something of a "healer" sometimes treated my ears by certain manipulations out in the bright moonlight. Dad sometimes tried blowing tobacco smoke into the ears. Each time it seemed to be caused by a bad cold, and an abscess would form in the ear space. At times this would "break" and then get well with no more ache for awhile.

The family in general, has been very fortunate as to health matters. A few weeks after wife and I were married, she developed quite a severe case of Eczema. Her face swelled up until she actually could hardly see. Dr. Jeffers then found that he had forgotten to tell her not use water or soap on the face until rid of the eczema. It finally cleared up. While Jim and Bob were in early school age, they developed what Dr. Peck called a heart murmur. The prescription was to lie perfectly still in bed for several weeks. This worked okay for a while. Then one day, the boys got in a tussel with each other, and one got a bloody nose. From then on, it seemed best to just let them go ahead and go to school. A couple times the family was quarantined with a form of scarlet fever, for several days.

During World War II, wife developed a cancerous condition in the right breast. Dr. Peck removed the area. Later she developed a serious thyroid condition and had surgery for that at Halstead, Kansas. She was several weeks recovering from the shock of the operation, before being able to return to our home. Jim and Jo took care of her at their home in Wichita for several weeks.

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skin rash, and in later stages, scaling off of the skin. It is caused by a streptococcus which produces toxin. The disease, which occurs primarily in the first decade of life, was an important cause of death in children prior to the twentieth century. Since then the incidence has declined markedly, and death is now rarely observed.

In her late sixties, she developed a hardening of the arteries, and this eventually brought about her death at age 68, inspite of all doctors could do.

The family has been very fortunate in never suffering any severe accidents or injuries. No member has had a broken bone, as far as I can remember.

I personally had some near accidents, but it seemed as though some sort of guardian angel was watching me. Once I fell down behind one of the horses when the team was running away. I fell exactly in front of the advancing front wheel of the wagon, heavily loaded. But I rolled just enough to the side that the wagon wheel merely grazed my hip. Another time, I was bringing the steam thresher engine, slowly backing up to couple to the separator, at the proper time to shut off the power. I in some way threw the throttle in the wrong direction, opened it wide open, the engine leaped toward the separator, but I instantly jammed the throttle shut, and the engine stopped just before pinning me against the hot boiler end.

I MISSED THE BOAT

During my life time, I missed the boat so many times.

I missed the boat by not finishing college and getting a degree. If I had been sufficiently motivated, I would have managed in some way to continue the extra two years that would have been required. But I failed at that time to realize how much a college degree would mean, and more so a Master's degree and Doctor's degree.

In my early twenties, I really considered trying to become a medical doctor. But the enormous expense of such schooling at that time deterred me from making the attempt. Then of course, romance came along. To care for a family and go to school was extremely difficult. So many, many school age folks, advanced school age, I mean, do get married and yet continue their schooling. Even in this case, I must consider that I was not sufficiently motivated to make the effort.

I was in on the ground floor of the automobile business with an auto agency. I should have realized that vast possibilities of the motor car business just beginning to loom on the business horizon. But I was more interested in the mechanical features of the motor car than in the merchandising of it.

In 1918, World War I was still on hand. Food produced by the farms, was considered to be a real war necessity. It was the thing for each able bodied man to get out and at least help with harvest, which in those days did require a great deal of individual man power. Labor saving harvesting machinery had not yet become common. I went out to the farm of Mr. Denny, some 12 or 14 miles south of town, in the Lawn Ridge area. He had purchased the first header thresher combine machine to be sold in this county. I had threshing experience and I took the job of operating this new machine for Mr. Denny. He owned 480 acres of the finest, level land, excellent for power farming. At the close of harvest, he wanted to sell this farm to me. I would not even talk with him. I thought, he would ask a very large sum for the land. Prices were running from $50.00 to $75.00 per acre at the time for such farm lands as this. I had no funds at all for any such investment. So I missed the boat by not talking with him and at least getting his sale figures and terms. Later that fall, Mr. Denny traded the farm to Mr. Crosby, and took in exchange a bunch of odds and ends. I mean trading items, and gave long time terms on the balance. The sale price was a ridiculously low price, I think around $30.00 per acre. It was not long before Mr. Crosby sold the land at a most handsome profit. Had I just talked with Mr. Denny, I could have made a deal with him, with a very, very small down payment. But of course, I could not forsee the enormous rise in land values that was coming. Also I did not realize the vast possiblities of power machine farming, which was just around the corner in agricultural progress.

I might mention that some pessimistic folks have insisted on joining Mark Twain in a facetious remark that it would have

been much better for the world in general, if old man Noah, had missed the boat, then mankind would have been wiped out by the flood, and the resulting misery suffered since then would have been avoided.

I missed the boat in my early life by failing to train myself to be more careful and exact in my work. I was always too much inclined to think that good enough should be let alone. But in fact good enough is not really good enough. Striving for perfection is actually a most beneficial trait, and should always be encouraged.

I also missed the boat most sadly in failing to anticipate the great rise in real estate values, to take place soon after World War II. I thought there would be some rise, but I failed to foresee that extreme advance of land prices, which ran often into ten fold. I shared to some extent in the profits of the general gain. But I missed the golden opportunity to really strike it rich on land value rises. The opportunity was right there, for everyone to see plainly.

THE STORY OF MY LIFE
TO
MY CHILDREN
GEORG, HERMANN, CHRISTOPH ISERNHAGEN

I took a ticket for the steamship Kaiser Frederick III (lower deck) for my brother Hermann and myself. The ship was to sail on May 10th, 1905. May the 13th Hermann and myself met at our parents' home and packed our things into a three foot cubic for our trip to America. May the 14th we rose early. After breakfast at 7 o'clock a brief goodbye and we started our journey. A last glance over the shoulder and then: "Farewell then my beloved homeland."[1]

Georg Isernhagen in the Uniform of the German Imperial Navy.

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[1]Title of a popular folk song, "Farewell then my beloved homeland." All German phrases not translated by Pastor Kolb have been translated by Professor Schmeller.

A proud ship glides slowly through the waves. America is the place of destination. To stand on the deck, to turn around once more; then they sail away from German soil and find their grave in America.[2] O, there was food for thought. To leave a home behind where one has experienced so many good and nice things and to go to a strange country with strange customs and strange language. But the truth of the poet remains: If God grants someone a special favor, he sends him out into the world.[3] The trip progressed well. After a seven days voyage, we had solid ground under our feet once more.[4] In New York we were met by Pastor Deering, the immigrant missionary, and were kindly taken care of. Determinedly the train followed its course toward the West. "Are we not there yet?" asked Hermann on the second day. "Yea," I said, "I don't know either; the tickets are still so long." I noticed that from time to time a piece was torn off. We cannot ask because the Gentlemen would not understand us anyway. They blabbed and quacked like the geese do. We must stand this blabbing a day or two more till we get to Kensington, Kansas or Agra,[5] where people know how to speak.

The thoughts often wandered back to where I came from before I got accustomed to the new world. The last breakfast and devotion in my father's house had made an unforgettable impression on me. There was the mother suffering from

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[2]These three sentences are translated from German.

[3]A line from a poem by the German Romantic poet Joseph Freiherr. Translated from German.

[4]By the early twentieth century transatlantic vessels were averaging approximately 20 knots. Thus, seven days does not seem far-fetched.

[5]Kensington is about eleven miles east of Agra which is approximately 145 miles east of St. Francis.

an uncurable disease. Father was crippled and his youngest sons, with blue caps and light package wander to the nearby station to leave them and the country for good. What might have been the thoughts of the two good parents? Their hope for old age wandered without a cure toward its own future. How, if I returned would I have found the parents? How would they behave, now that the sons were gone. Strong and confident to see us again, I hope. I have an understanding now since my own children have grown up. When one got married it was everytime as though a part of my own was cut off. One grows together with one's children. The family is really one, and yet one after another will leave and the parents remain behind, old, tired from work and lonesome. The day declines for one in a strange country. And yet after so many years the roots are in the new country not in the old. The old country to which the thoughts return is a country of the past. It does not exist now. If the old immigrant would go back, he would be overjoyed to see the land of his youth but as soon as he would think of staying he would find that he is a stranger in his own home town. The people are not the same, the time is not the same, the feeling is not the same, and after all these years on the wide open prairie the old country looks small. Such is the tragedy of a tree that has been transplanted in the years of prime. The man looks back with a longing heart and at the same time he praises God that he has guided him in such a way that he came to this country, obtained a home, sees the happiness of his children about him while otherwise the cruel wars in the old country might have put him and his sons, if there were any, six feet under the sod before life had run its natural course. But the military system of the old world has caught up with us here and has come to stay. Experiences as I have narrated them in regard to my service in the army were impossible for most farmer boys in this country. From now on, with unavoidable changes, the American boy will come home with the same pride and similar tales. When their time is up, they will

die by the thousands as those before have died and they will die in far distant countries, wondering where the boundaries of their home country really are.

As an example how God really arranged my life in details I shall briefly tell of one experience that impressed me deeply and even gave me an uneasy conscience until all was clearly understood. I had met a fine girl of truly Christian character, the daughter of a respectable farmer. She stayed at the same house where my Lieutenant lived, and providence seemed to have brought us together. We arrived at a complete understanding excepting one point. She had set her heart to stay in Germany with her folks and friends while I was determined to go to America. I passed through critical hours and great was the temptation to stay. But an inner inexplicable urge always brought the desire to go to America into the foreground until finally neither the unquestioned love for my parents nor the devoted love for my girl could change my resolution. It had to be America. I had to leave without seeing my girl once more. It was only later on that I wrote to her and received her answer, telling me that all was well with her and she was happy in the midst of her family.[6] If I had yielded to temptation I could not look back today on my life in America with all that is implied and which causes me to praise the mercy of the Lord.

After the long and tedious journey we arrived at Kensington, Ks. The first Sunday, we attended church, of course. One could talk his mother tongue to one's hearts content. We met many friends who wanted to know how this one and the other fared in Germany. On Monday work began. How hard it was. So hot, so depressing; it was difficult to breathe. And the nights? Restful sleep was impossible in

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[6] In these two sentences Isernhagen skips a large number of years and does not mention his efforts to bring his former sweetheart to America. Thus, the reader could easily conclude that he did not mind leaving her.

such heat. One wandered about as in a dream. One was always tired, tired when you rose, tired when you were at work, tired when you greeted the evening. This was due to the change of climate. I never quite overcame the effects of the change. For two years I worked at the section. Then the itching foot sent me away. I wanted to be my own boss. My thoughts were directed toward the West where land still was cheap. First I inquired whether there was an Evangelical Lutheran Church. I was told there was one near St. Francis which is served by the Indian Missionary Sailer who lived at Alma, Neb. and came to St. Francis by train now and then. This congregation had been organized by Pastor G. Jansen. I took one month to go to Denver and back. May, 1907 I departed and alighted in Colby. There, at the land office I marked the homesteads in the county. From there I proceeded to Sharon Springs, Oakley was not overlooked. But returned again to Colby. From there I went to Denver, staying only one day, and came back to Goodland. From Goodland I used the stage and a buggy, to get to St. Francis.[7] We passed one farm on the five hour trip where we watered the horse. With me was the brother-in-law of Henry Loyd who met us at Wheeler, Kansas. My homestead maps were thoroughly studied. One morning Henry Loyd loaded hay on a wagon and we, with a strong team, started out for the West. We strove to reach Jaqua on the South side of the Republican River. There was hardly anything but sand and stones and only now and then and far between a poorly equipped farm. In Jaqua we ate a little and returned to St. Francis. In such a God forsaken country I did not want to waste my life. However, I remained in St. Francis, alone. What now. Don't I know anybody here? Oh yes, Henry Klinzmann I remembered. He must live somewheres around here. But where to find him? No one could give me

[7] Colby is about 71 miles southeast of St. Francis, Oakley is around 94 miles southeast, Sharon Springs is 71 miles south, and Goodland is 40 miles south.

information. At the telephone office I was told he has no telephone. Later I got acquainted with John Keamly, neighbor of Klinzmann. He had a telephone. I called there and soon Henry came to meet me. I stayed with him a few days, knowing him well. Then we went by buggy to seek a homestead. First we stopped at Braunschweig's, an old settler usually well informed. Yet, he knew nothing of open homesteads. On my map I had two or three marked. We drove South till we arrived at the North-West corner where David Raile later lived. There, Henry said, "I think we turn back: the evening approaches and I am far from home. Oh no, I said, there is a homestead only a half a mile south of here. There I shall go and you go home. I know where I am and where the town is." Henry went home and I walked to a place where Jakob Holzwart later lived. It was not bad, good enough for me, but I had marked two more places. I wanted to see them too. One was where I live now, the other one mile further west. Not to lose my direction I followed the section lines and arrived safely in the evening at the bridge over the river. Next day I inquired whether the places were still free and learned that the first place was very recently taken by Michael Reichert.[8] The second was so hilly that I did not want it. What I finally took was neither to my liking. Yet if one sees a thing a second time it looks better. So I wandered out once more; over the whole 160 acres I went but it would not suit me. Then I met my neighbour to be, Jakob Raile. I told him of my intentions and he urged me to take it assuring me that he would buy it from me should I not like it later, after I had improved the place. I made my way back to town, looked up Jaqua, the land agent,[9] who

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[8]David Raile, Jakob Holzwart, and Michael Reichart were farmers who were neighbors of Isernhagen.

[9]Jakob Raile was also a farmer and the cousin of Elizabeth Zweygardt. Isernhagen allowed him to live in his house. Jaqua was the land agent discussed in the introduction.

told me that the title of the land was in the name of Mr. Tressel who lived in town and that I could contest it. I went to see Mr. Tressel asking him his price. He said: "$300.00." I told him: "So much money is not in my possession; but I offer you $90." The offer was accepted, and right away we went to Mr. Jaqua to get the papers ready and signed. Well, I thought the papers pertaining to 160 acres are mine; but now back to Agra. The money I had diminished and the consumptive pocket book did not allow three meals a day. Yet I managed to reach Agra with a capital of 20 cents. In August 1907 I packed once more and Friederich Miller took me with his team to Naponee, Nebr. From there I could use the train to St. Francis. Certainly I did not like to leave brothers and friends to go into a different part of the land and live among people of different types and views. I really could not explain why I did it. I came again to Jakob Raile. He was threshing and I could help him. He had other works for me for which he would repay me back when I was to build my house. Soon I could start on it. It took four days to quarry the stones and four more days to haul them. The structure went up in no time at all. It measured 16 x 28, had two rooms but no wooden floor and cost $30. Just as princely was the furniture--an old bed and an old cook stove which a friendly neighbor had given me. I was a lonely man all by himself in his kingdom. August 20th, 1907, I could move in and for the first time I went into my own house and slept in my own bed. I did not sleep badly but next morning no one called for breakfast. Ah--there was a great stillness and quietness about the place. I had to go and pick up Kansas coal. For this noble fuel I did not have to go far. Right next to the house I could start gathering in. After the coal question was solved and plenty material was on hand the bread question announced itself. What to cook? Eggs? There were no hens to lay. Milk? Where was the cow? And there was no baker to provide bread. Meat, I had. I had a hog butchered and that was at

least something. Thus on the Menu list of the hermit the following tidbits were noted: meat and crackers with sweetened coffee. Potatoes which every good German likes were a rarity. So breakfast consisted of meat, crackers, and coffee but at noon a fundamental change took place; for now I had crackers, coffee and meat. Such a hermit likes to visit. With preferences he arranges his visits so that he arrives shortly before mealtime. Especially did I like the three miles to church in the hope that one or the other would invite us to dinner. To my deep regret we had service only every four weeks and this, as everyone will agree is a little too much between decent meals. How I stood it for a whole year is today yet a riddle to me. Fortunately the winter was lenient; otherwise I would have frozen to death. I could not leave. There was neither work nor money. At Christmas 1907, I had drawn my last penny from the bank at Agra. I found some work in winter with my neighbour, Georg Beaney. He built a cellar with stones from the creek and I was permitted to help. I got my meals and some money. In spring 1908, I bought a team of mares which foaled in April and these were the first representatives of animal life on the place of the hermit. Spring came in dry. At that time there was little winter-wheat sown and what was there did not look good. Summer wheat and barley were not much better. Corn was planted very little. Work was not to be found nor could I leave the place on account of the horses for whom I had to draw water from the well. For a pump and tank there was no money. These were hard times. How one would have liked to work if there only had been work and an opportunity to earn wages. Of course I got some work but had to walk four miles in the morning and the evening to and from the place of work. If I was not there at six o'clock in the morning I would get nothing to eat. And at home I often had nothing to cook and in the evening I laid my tired body on the straw. All this for 85 cents. Oh, how often went my thoughts back to the ship. It could not go on

this way. To get up at 3:30 a.m., sometimes with, sometimes without breakfast, to work, at noon enough to eat to hold till evening; for the man whom I worked did not know early quitting time. Usually it was nine o'clock when I reached home. Thus the summer passed; the harvest was poor, work and threshing little. At this time I got acquainted with her who is now my wife. We got married October 11, 1908. From the parents of my wife, we received much help, cows, chickens and necessary furniture. The first crop yielded 100 bushels of barley and 400 bushels of wheat. The next three years were failures and hail, our courage almost failed but again and again we took new hope. Then came winter 1911 and 1912 with lots of snow and hardly feed for the poor cattle. Many cattle perished miserably. The snow was deep and horses were poor; they hardly could pull the buggy through the snow. So I walked to town, carried butter and eggs, if such were there, and brought back what was needed for the family. Those winters I shall never forget. From there on times got better. There were crops and there was work and the family increased in due time. Six healthy children grew up to our greatest joy. Health was our best gift. Now that I am 55 years old I look back upon my life spent as described here briefly and it still lives in my memory. You, my children who are reading this, think back. Different questions demand an answer. Which was the best time of life. One may divide life in three or four periods. First, the time of childhood till confirmation. Oh, time of youth, oh beautiful time, how far away, how long ago. How joyously did one ring to the neighbours: Early in the morning, tra-la-la-la, we drive our cows tra-la-la-la. Over there stands a chapel, looks quietly down into the valley; down there in the meadow... the shepard boy sings a tune.[10] One was so glad and so content, and without a single care. Then the wonderful day

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[10]These two sentences are translated from German.

of my confirmation. Then I answered the question of the Pastor: Do you intend to remain faithful to the Lutheran Church? With a joyous yes. I still can answer with yes. Next comes the youth that reaches to the twenties. During this period one deems himself smarter than father and mother. One lives to choose his own way. Already they see the shortcomings of others. Obeying becomes harder. In this period one deems himself most prudent. Then comes the army life. There one learns to obey each word and if one does, the army life can be a blessing for him. Now follows the time when one begins to think about past and future, especially the future. What shall become of me, where shall I start? The future trees are budding. One looks far ahead and the eyes turn toward America where there is so much room. The Brothers on the other side write so hopefully. The plan is conceived and will be carried out. If I look back on all this I ask, how come it that only now, after the World War I, I have a clear idea why I went to America. Would I have remained I would have fallen like so many others as an unripe apple into the grass. Is it not to marvel at that all five brothers were here? No, the good and faithful God has led us thus without our knowing it. And now here, after I had so many good things experienced I became a pioneer, took roots among members of another tribe, should the good God now have forgotten me? Certainly not. If one asks me were you ever in want. I had to answer, no never. Indeed in civil life I did not attain honor and glory. I remained one of the common people.

In telling you about my life in America I have touched only the high points. This picture can stand a few more details.

First of all I should tell you of my neighbour Jakob Raile. A short and talkative farmer, who lived a half of a mile south of my place. I would help him, with his farm work and later he would help me. At least I had found a roof over my head. Jakob Raile gave all hospitality he had. The

house had only two rooms without a connecting door that was covered only by a curtain. Jakob and his wife were very friendly and fatherly. Many questions were asked but in altogether different dialect which I had never heard before. My host hailed from Southern Russia, Besserabia, in fact. He was a member of the Lutheran Church which stood a little more than four miles from his place. I saw myself in another surrounding with other people who had other customs, other views, other language.

The land was to be worked with the disc to prepare it for winter wheat. Next Sunday we had church. Jakob and family and I got ready. Charly, the weak bay, and Clip, much stronger, had the harness, out of repair, thrown over their ribs of which all were there. In the house was much life to be noticed. The good woman had her hands full with the two offsprings who evidently suffered from hydrophobia and exercised their voices at the tops of their lungs.[11] Jakob belabored the names and tails of the horses. After that we went to the best room in order to dress. I had the privilege to be first. I thought now one has to put on his best face and the best suit that was in the trunk. Jakob has told me that there were also girls who would not be averse to fulfill the destiny of girls, namely to get married. I reached for the only silk shirt that was used only once and put it on. Also my boots of patent leather came out and the mustache was brushed after the fashion of Kaiser Wilhelm. For I was told in Germany that a kiss without a mustache was like soup without salt. One had to be prepared for all events. Jakob had told various experiences of his. Only I was not quite sure whether the stories could be taken at face value. At least I had the impression that Jakob had the gift of stretching a good story. Finally I was ready to meet whatever may turn up and stepped out that my host could

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[11]Hydrophobia means a morbid dread of water or rabies.

also get on his best. But he was not so long in preparing as I was. He only stepped into his Sunday fleece. The trousers were pulled over the long boots and another shirt over the old one. The boots were greased with lard to give them the correct Sunday appearance. Now all were ready; Charly and Clip were hitched to the spring wagon for gasoline buggies were not common as yet. All boarded and forth the chargers pranced toward the church. Jakob was very busy. One get-up followed the other, intersparsed with Charly and Clip; the continuous shaking of the lines gave emphasis to the words and Jakob's mouth found time for other work besides admonishing the horses. I asked him whether he had taken lunch along. The church should not last so long. "No", he said and emitted a chocolate colored soup over board. I am always cautious; I took a piece of American puppernickel because everybody told me it is a protection against worms. Meanwhile we passed the farm of his father-in-law, Jakob Miller. They had also readied themselves for church but not for the Lutheran Church, but for the Evangelical Church, that is the Church of the Brethren of Albrecht.[12] They were staunch members of the so-called Evangelical Church, Albrechts-brüder is their correct name. One evening I was invited to supper and afterwards to attend one of their meetings at which the elder of their church was supposed to speak. The doctrine of the Evangelic Society, as they called themselves, was to me an unknown quantity. So I accepted innocently and was more than friendly received because the Miller family hoped not only for a new church member but also for a new

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[12]The Lutheran Church takes its name from Martin Luther, the German religious reformer. Luther himself objected to the use of his name and advocated instead the name Evangelical as a designation for the reformed church. Like many other religious movements Lutheranism experienced schisms and one of its offshoots was the Evangelical Church which was more strict, fundamental, and pietistic in nature.

member of the family. The spring wagon was loaded with people and drawn by good horses. We arrived soon at the church eight miles to the northeast. We were not the first ones. The church was already filled to three-fourths of its capacity. The singing could be heard by those outside. I was shown to a place next to the aisle about in the middle of the building. But what songs did they sing? They were no chorals or spiritual melodies--street ballads, popular songs, ditties worked over and provided with evangelical society texts filled the house of God. Hardly one song had ended when another brother started a new one. Then the elder appeared at the lecture and admonished repentance with long tape worm sentences and with much moaning and sighing. "Come forth to the bench of repentance, come the savior is calling." The bench was soon filled. Among the repentants were the two daughters of Miller accompanied by their mother, who was foremost in praying to help the dear children through. There was a moaning and groaning interspersed by sighing amens of the elder. The eyes of these filled with tears. I did not know whether it was joy or sorrow. The scene did not touch me in any way. I could neither laugh nor cry. The meeting ended and not a single soul, as Mrs. Miller expressed herself had broken through. Before I left I was invited to the next meeting. I accepted. It was a Thursday evening. The trip to the church and the moaning, groaning, sighing, and weeping was just a repetition of the first meeting. But all at once a couple of young girls jumped, gesticulated with the arms and cried, I have it, I have it. For joy they ran down the aisle and were very generous with their kisses to the right and to the left. I do not remember whether my mouth was pointed in expectation, but since I was in back the kissing fever had subsided before the girls reached me. On the way home nothing extraordinary happened; but at home Mrs. Miller desired to take me separate from the people. Before I started down the creek she said: "Now Georg, when are you going to be converted? It certainly would not hurt

you. We also are Lutheran. I too have learned the Catechism. But conversion is needed. Behold the people in the Lutheran Church. They drink and smoke and chew. Take for example that Jakob Raile. He spits; that is a shame." "Yes", I said, "we must repent and confess but not in this manner that I have observed in your church. Luther says, our life is to be a continuous repentence, a changing of mind and the fruits come by themselves. And not through law and certain methods as with you. God caused all things to grow for good use and nothing is bad. He saw all he had made and behold it was very good. If people do not exercise continence that is their fault and they will have to suffer. One may eat too much. Don't your people transgress the law that ye have made? Don't your boys smoke cigarettes and throw them away when their parents appear and things of this kind more?" More was said and I took my way to my sod house in deep meditation. I was convinced, however, that the over friendliness would soon come to an end. Conversion and girls closely connected retreated to the horizon.[13] A single swallow does not make an answer, even if it is the first one; girls will not cause me sorrow, even if they are the prettiest.[14]

Jakob and his Misses told stories well embroidered about my riches and staunch Lutheranism. What fathers and mothers imagined I had no way of knowing. Only I noticed that I passed a severe examination. Uncle Louis invited us to dinner. The father of my host, Mike Raile with family was also present. The family Zweygardt consisted of five children, six boys and two grown up girls. The mother, assisted by the daughters, soon had the table ready and all took their places. After grace, before meat, the steaming noodle soup made the round. Meanwhile I was bombarded with

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[13]Isernhagen means that he did not relish being pressured to convert in order to become acceptable to a daughter's parents.

[14]Translated from German.

questions. Whence I came? Whether I belong to the Lutheran Church? Where I have been last? Whether the people in Agra talk like they do? I said: "No, among themselves they speak mostly low-German." Ha-ha-ha low German! With such people we used to live once upon a time, here north of us, the Zuege family, oh they were course, dirty people. In Russia we called such people Katchuppa. The meaning of this name escaped me but I had a rough idea it was not a compliment. Meanwhile the soup plates were emptied and the two daughters had them removed. Then came another course, a bowl with smashed potatoes. The second bowl was filled with Hallupsie krautrolls. I was told it was something wrapped in cabbage leaves. But could I take of it like all the others? I risked it and allowed a longish round ball to fall on my plate full of confidence in my good stomach which never has failed me or left me in the lurch. Now followed the meat plate with fried chicken and sausage. Those were indeed alluring and I yielded to temptation. They did not disappoint me. In the afternoon we young people had a fine entertainment. I was asked to come next Monday and to help threshing. It seemed I had passed the first examination. I was there Monday early and was supposed to pitch. At once I noticed that the oldest daughter was also equipped with a fork and it was apparent that it was not the first time. I thought on her a good boy was lost. If she could bake pancakes as well, then, yea, I could later assure myself that the latter was as good as the former. The harvest had been poor and consequently the threshing did not last long. Now back to my host. Their broom corn cutting had started. Two of the neighbour's daughters, Jakob Miller's, also came to help. It turned out to be joyful cutting. I was also invited for next Sunday to dinner. More than friendly was the reception and I dined well. In spite of all I did not feel as well as on the Sunday before. It seemed to me as though the girls would have like to make intimate acquaintance with the mustache, salted soup or none. I

thought to marry is not trading horses. Now the house had to be built. The cutting of broom corn was over and I wandered with stone hammer, crow bar and other instruments down to the creek to quarry stones.

Wherever I went, marriage showed up in the background and not always so far back either. Already in Agra it came very close. After my brother William who had worked with me on the section was married the foreman said, now Georg it is your turn. Give me $50 and I find you exactly the one you want. I mentioned all possible conditions. She had to be of German stock, had to know English, she had to be beautiful and gifted with music. "I shall find you just such a one," the foreman said and general laughter concluded the conversation. Later I found special attention on the part of the cashier lady in the store where I used to buy on Saturday evenings. She made it a point to wait on me personally and ask questions about this and that and also of Germany. I knew her and her family well. Sometimes it got late before I came home. One winter morning when only the foreman and I were yet at work the foreman came back from town and invited me to follow him to town. There in the store he presented to me the lady in question as the one he had found for me. He wanted his $50 and all I had to do was to say, yes. The lady was ready. I blushed all over; said something about not being able to earn my own keep to speak of supporting two and left the store. The foreman was a little angry over such stupidity. What was it? Guidance of God.

Notwithstanding my successful escapes from girls who would catch me I was keenly aware of the Biblical truth that it is not good for man to be alone. One gets indifferent and does not care about order, not even in eating and drinking. It is not good, neither for body nor for the soul that man should be alone. Body and soul perish. Man cannot live to himself. He longs for company with one of like mind. One can notice this in civil as well as in church life. Even among

criminals it is evident that it is not good for a man to be alone. This knowledge together with my visits to the church every other Sunday and my continuous followships with the family Zweygardt led to a more intimate acquaintance with the eldest daughter of Louis Zweygardt. One day I took courage and asked whether she was willing to travel with me the path of life whether she would give me her hand. She consented without reservation since the parents were also agreeable. I had found a helpmate who was one with me in faith and doctrine. What counted most with me. The dialect, the custom, the usages, all external things I thought I could get used

Ludwig and Christen (Knorr) Zweygardt, parents of Elizabeth Zweygardt. Married October 25, 1887 in Russia. Came to Cheyenne County and the United States in 1894.

to. From now on the hermit could sing and whistle once more. "To know a faithful heart is the most priceless treasure. He who knows such a jewel can call himself truly blessed."[15] From now on the visits at Zweygardt's became more frequent. Of the caresses I shall say nothing. They come now over the air. We had more important things to discuss. We had agreed with her parents that the wedding should be held in the fall. We were now in the first part of June. July the fourth came around. I should, like all the young boys do, take my best girl to town. I had no buggy, the only fitting vehicle for such an occasion. I approached my old English neighbour and borrowed his buggy--for my old farm wagon would not do. July the fourth 1908, I stopped with the borrowed buggy before the door of my future parents-in-law. In easy tempo we reached the town. This was our first drive together. What happened in town I don't remember. I know that we walked up and down the street and were envied by many. The latter fact made no deep impression on us. The covenant was made for good and now the wedding had to be prepared. The summer ended, the harvest was poor but did not influence our plans. The day appeared. It was October 11, 1908. All was ready for the celebration of the wedding. I had even bought a suit, not a fine serge, but a gray-brown cotton suit and this not yet paid. Later egg money paid for it. The wedding guests invited by the parents seemed to be present. All was richly decorated, especially the buggy for the bridal couple. The whole congregation nearly all related took part. The ceremony proper was performed at 10:30 a.m. After a short talk by Pastor Sailer on Joshua's confession: "I and my house shall serve the Lord," the service had ended. Some had already pushed through the door. The buggy carrying the bridal couple stopped at the church door. Quickly it was taken and one whistle of the driver sent the team off

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[15]Translated from German.

the wedding presents. Everything was there. A wedding trip was out of the question because the means were not at hand. But we could milk cows and gather eggs. We had work and adjusted ourselves easily and gratefully to the new conditions.

After telling of my wedding in the old conventional manner I would like to tell of a wedding with a strong modern element mixed in. But modern isn't the word to describe this wedding. It was ultra-modern in a setting as old fashioned as you can wish for. Life had quietly skipped into normal channels and the old law of marrying and giving in marriage prevailed as ever. The family Bader was hit by the marriage fever. The daughter Lydia, a nurse by profession, had selected a young man from the east. Therefore the wedding had to be far above the common. They knew the east, had learned the way of civilization and were prepared to give the besighted west the benefit of their learning. Those people out there in the sticks shall see what a proper wedding looks like. On a fine Sunday Pastor Zeilinger read the ban and invited in the name of the bridal couple the whole congregation to come to church and see the wedding. The time was the following Sunday, 2:30 p.m. The news hit the congregation like lightening out of the blue sky. Next Sunday morning was to be a reading service. Since I was the lector I was notified that we had to use the basement since the auditorium upstairs had to be prepared for the wedding. The people came and life began to stir. Everybody wanted to see the decorated church, the flowers and the banners, the buntings and the tinsel. Voices became louder and crystallized in the demand that the church auditorium be opened for divine service. This ended with the marching into the decorated church, confidently holding the book under the arm. There was an abundance of bunting but they were not meant for us. They were for the wedding. The service like all others came to a close. With what spiritual benefits the hearers had listened is not for me to judge. One hurried home for dinner to be back in time and to miss nothing of

the show. Nobody was supposed to enter the church before the arrival of the bridal pair. But impatience got the upper hand. Again one could hear the assurance that this is our church. We enter and no one shall stop us. Our honorable matrons led the way. Through a side door I had entered the balcony from where nothing could escape my eyes. I had the impression the church is leased to strangers. There was a noticeable uneasiness in the air. Our elders were not needed. Ushers, imported from the east took charge of the affairs. They sounded as though they walked in riding boots when they marched up and down the aisle. They also came to our staunch patriots to persuade them to move peaceably to another place, certainly not a better one. But one spoke for the other. This is my place; here is where I always sit. Outside three pillars of the Salem congregation appeared and ushers came to guide them to a proper place. But one let them know for the benefit of all that he as well as the people here about is able to walk unaided. The church filled. One could see among the plain farmers the cream of the city, bankers and businessmen, lawyers, cobblers, and tailors. The organ began to intone the march. Meanwhile the pastor came in, followed by the bride's brother who accompanied the bridegroom. The ceremony begins. A brief and well meant speech starts the young couple on the road of married life. The pledge is sealed by exchanging rings and joining of right hands. Then the heads of the pair turned, one half to the right, the other half to the left, pointing the red lips to meet in a kiss that sounded not unlike a bursting shell. The first professional kiss in the Salem church had made history. From my place of observation I noticed the handkerchiefs coming out. Why, I could not say because no one was weeping. The kerchiefs played around the corners of the mouth, far away from the eyes. In the immediate vicinity were young people who confessed that here was the place to learn. The young couple took their stand in the hall to receive congratulations and gifts. One more opportunity

to shake hands and to admire the material of painting as well as the application of such material to the face of the bride. Even the nose was not neglected. Outside one could see the forming of groups. Evidently everybody had something to tell to his neighbour. The general opinion ran somewhat like this: That outfit from the animal sphere kissed in public. If they must lick each other let them do so at home. My children got married too without such fuss and we could have afforded the finest wedding. Bankers and their like had before attended Dutch weddings and never had their stomachs had cause for complain, unless it be on the morning after the night before, which was, of course everybody's own affair. Neither had anybody just reason for hollering about unquenched thirst. They stood at decent distance before the door to the basement to be at hand, when the call should come: all is prepared, oxen and fatlings are butchered. But it took unusually long and one could see here and there tongues playing over their lips and round cigars half way burned up. They produced their invitation cards. The invitation was there, but dinner,--well, dinner was not mentioned. "I guess," one remarked reflectively, "it is all over." Meanwhile a few pictures were taken of the bridal couple. Then they left the church, the invited guests, and drove away followed by a few close friends and the Pastor.

KANSAS AT ITS WORST

1934 drew to a close, dry and windy. Behind us was the mild winter, just cold enough to put up ice for the next summer. The works of the great New Deal projects began. One frog pond after another came into being, through the Herculean efforts of the relief workers. The men really were tops in idleness. On highway 36 they began to carry out the well laid plans. It was a contractor's job but too hard for Roosevelt's shovel brigade. That type of men are at home only on dance floors, shows, drink and gambling dens. Spring

came and with it in every increasing fury the dust storms. The workers on the road projects hid under bridges and culverts and had to be pulled out by their foreman or they would have been smothered by dust. The storm blew one day this direction, next day from the other. After the storm on the following morning one could see abandoned autos. The dust had choked their lungs. On the road from St. Francis to Bird City one counted 20 in one day. I too was surprised by the storm. We, my son August and I, were grading the road east of our house; a half mile from home, when the storm overtook us. We tried to turn back but the horses refused to be moved a step. It was so dark, that I barely could see my hay and the horses. We simply had to sit and wait for one whole hour till daylight came through again. Only then could we manage to go home. It was five o'clock in the afternoon. In due time the season for planting corn was with us. We had a little moisture but too late and too little for the wheat which had been killed by the storm. The farmers worked with might to put their wheat fields to corn. In contrast to the dried upland, the creeks and river showed green grass land on both sides. Everybody wished he had such land in the bottom. We, the settlers on creeks and rivers were envied by many. We had no need of green spectacles to deceive our cows. The grass was even lush. The pastures in the bottoms were filled with horses and cattle from the dried up pastures upland. All at once it rained Monday before ascension. May the 27th came the first rain at our place. It did not reach far, yet the creek rose rapidly and high.[16] It did not rain; it poured. Two

[16]He is referring to the Republican River Flood of 1935. This produced the greatest flood during a period of at least seventy years. The following account from a local newspaper provides a good picture of human conditions in the flood area. "Dwellers in the lowlands were warned of . . . danger, . . . in some cases trucks were waiting to take them to higher ground but they had lived there so long and seen so-called high water so many times without trouble that all warnings and proffered help were rejected, with perilous results."

days later in the evening water came by buckets. One understood the Biblical terms, the windows of heaven were opened. I went to the chicken house which was lower than the house. All was one lake. The water rushed in through one door and out through the other. The chicken yard was one foot under water. In the brooder house the chickens attempted to swim. I opened one drain that had closed and there with my rescue work was done. I could go to bed. Next morning everyone was up in good time. There was the sound of rushing swirling water. The boys, August and Otto had already from upstairs noted the water in the creek. They had also established that no cattle had perished. The bridge, however, was gone. After breakfast a thorough investigation was planned. The boys went to see William who lived a half a mile farther down the creek. They returned with the good news that William was alright. But the river was said to be extraordinary high and still rising. One could hear the river even two miles and more away. We drove to Daniel's farm next to the river. What a spectacle! Autos and men on horseback with ropes and farmers who were looking for their cattle. The river had spread a full mile. One herd of cattle closely backed and carried down the river numbering 80 head. Big trees came rolling down the stream. The big concrete bridge had disappeared, and was never found. One pillar was later seen as the only remnant. Machines of all types, five irrigation systems with equipments were taken. We drove home and found ourselves cut off from the world. Nowhere a bridge; not even across the creek to Haigler. The telephone had left us cold. The radio alone was in fine shape. Mail did neither arrive nor leave. And what was the fate of the many farmers

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The refusal of many farmers to heed the warnings and the sudden rise of the water when the flood finally struck resulted in a large loss of livestock, and after the water receeded the stranded carcasses presented a serious health problem. For more information on the Republican River Flood see Robert Follansbee and J. B. Spiegel, "Flood on the Republican and Kansas Rivers," May and June 1935," United States Department of the Interior, Harold Ickes, Secretary (Washington, 1937).

who lived next to the river? I shall tell of some. About four miles west and two miles south lived a brother-in-law of Jake Zweygardt, Web Sheller. The farm was almost in the middle of the valley. The road from St. Francis to Jaqua led between house and barn. Before the flood the river had approached the house from the west about hundred yards, turned south and then turned west again. Here lived Sheller with wife and child, in peace and happiness till the water surrounded him that morning. Notices could not be given. Telephones were out of order. Higher and higher rose the water. The cow shed holding 30 head of cattle went over. From his house Sheller noticed that the river was making a new bed, this time directly toward his house. The water entered the house. It could not be stopped. Almost despairing the young wife paced the room. God, is there no help? They were like the toll keeper in the song about a brave man. Outside raged the flood. North of the house, about a half of a mile were their friends, unable to help. West of the barn, where the old river used to be, two people were noticed. A girl of nineteen years and a boy of thirteen; clinging to a tree. But the tree is washed out by the roots and slowly goes over. The girl succeeds in getting to a place where trash had collected between trees. She clings to another tree. The boy cannot get to that place. He swims closely by the house where the young woman is nearly fainting. The boy said, what shall I do now? He came through the main water and swimming east got to a place where between machines he found a spot where he could hold on to. Meanwhile the rescue work was progressing. Four empty oil barrels were fastened to planks. Four men manned a raft and tried to get to the girl. Those at the bank held fast to the top for the force of the water is immense. Two attempts failed. The third time, however, the girl took hold of the rope thrown to her and fastened it to a tree and two men got to her by means of holding on to the top. The men at the bank pulled raft and people to safety. The boy, however, could

not be saved till next morning. The name of this family I have forgotten. Father and mother were later found dead. They had spent thirty-six hours in water. Also of the Huckleberry Creek a story can be told. An old couple had saved themselves to the upper part of their swimming house. The man had to pull his wife up by the hair. The house went to pieces but the old couple, by the name of Ferguson, landed on a higher place and found themselves in company with snakes, wild cats, and other animals who had found a haven here. The father of the Hardeng's children was found by relief workers as late as summer 1935 standing upright in the river sand, one hand sticking out. The mother and one son were found at Benkelman. The son had suffered a broken neck.

What had become of the Sheller family? At the same time when Mrs. Sheller saw the boy swimming by she noticed a great tree being pressed against the barn, pushing the barn to one side. Her house also began to lean to one side. Through the tree the water, however, was deflected enough to give the house a chance to resist. Mr. Sheller had worked his way to the barn, found a saddle horse and succeeded in rescuing wife and child. The whole place where once a fine farm building stood had become a desert of sand.

Many farmers on the upland lost horses and cattle which they had pastured in the valley. At such times the worst type of wolves make their appearance. Thieves came with trucks, loaded horses and cattle and hauled them away. Even the lumber of destroyed bridges disappeared through the handiwork of these gentlemen of the night. We had not only one flood; we had four. It took seven weeks before we managed to come to town by car. The workers of the state worked day and night to repair 27 Highway. Hardly was one flood over when the next came along. Instead of one river there was now two. The Republicans had a Democrat for neighbor. But neither Republican nor Democrat chose to run under the bridge. Democrat came close to the depot and was

spanned by a wooden bridge. The Republican also declared his independence. He avoids the bridge and approaches the Finley place. But this was the only place where the farmer could hope to cross in order to get to town. Transportation was effected by every available means, caterpillars, horses, wagons, and boats where the water was running deep. One sat on his egg case, the other on his cream can and waited for his turn to be helped. The businessmen had hired six teams for this purpose. After one had transacted all his business he was brought to the water. The situation there changed hourly. One could reach the stream on foot, if one did not get stuck in the quick sand. Through the whole valley penetrated a horrible smell, caused by the dead and half buried animals. After cars were able to cross they had to be closely covered to protect them against drifting sand. It felt like hail hitting the face when one drove through the oncoming sand.

Georg Isernhagen and Family. Front Row, left to right: August (b. 1913); Elizabeth; Georg; Otto (b. 1918). Back row, left to right: Martha (b. 1923); Emma (b. 1917); William (b. 1910); Lydia (b. 1909).

OUR CHURCH

Not withstanding all the faults of members and pastors the church was and is the backbone of every community. How would I have fared without a church? Even when I did not mention it, I want you to know that at the bottom of my heart God and His Church was always there. I was born in the Lutheran Church. I came from a country where the Lutheran Church was at her best. But I loved the Lutheran Church also for what she had given me.

The Church that we all attended has her roots way back in the time of the Reformation in the southern part of Germany. The Great Reformer Brenz[17] molded the Lutheranism of your fathers from your mother's side. Pastor Kolb told me that in the thinking of the members of the Salem Church he found everywhere traces of Brenz. They took their faith along to Bassarabia and did not forget it when they came to America. During the hard times of their beginning they found time and money to build a church. The first pastors who worked here were: Pastor A. Stein and Pastor Gerhart Jansen. They came over from Bethune. Both were faithful pastors and especially Gerhart Jansen, a genuine east Frisian, with wonderful red beard, and truth and honesty in person. Then for quite a few years Pastor Sailer served the congregation, coming out from Alma, Nebraska. He had done missionary work among the Indians, lived on a farm and was a very unique man. One never knew what he may do or say next. He also got on in age. But he did splendid work for our church. Some were dissatisfied and tried to get a church farther to the north with a different pastor. The main families were: Braunschweig, Herth, John Rueb, John Knorr,

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[17]This is Johannes Brenz who was an associate of Martin Luther and religious leader of the duchy of Würtenberg in the 1530's. Brenz was responsible for working out a program of school and church reform which made the duchy Protestant. He approved Luther's theological assertion concerning the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

Henry Klinzmann, Phillips Brody, Rath, and Andrew Schauer, Hilt. There was another Lutheran of substance able to help, William Rueb. But he chose to stand on the side and look in. The church was then good enough to baptize his children and confirm them. This group split over the question where to build the church. Braunschweig wanted it where he lived, Rath where their family lived and so it happened. Braunschweig, Rueb, Herth, Knorr built the church, later known as Hope Church, and Rath and Schauer built the parsonage on Jakob Rath's place. Braunschweig was America born and followed the liberal trend in faith. He did not care about denominations. He wanted a free church where everybody could preach who used the Bible. But they called a Luther Pastor, by the name of Busse. When Busse wanted a constitution Braunschweig refused. The pastor was a hard head. He threw the call on the table and left. Then Methodists came, Congregationalists, and Baptists were to be invited. That was too much for the good Lutherans and the families. Rueb, Knorr, Brody, Klinzmann, left and joined what was then called the Zweygardt Church. Also Andrew Schauer came back. Braunschweig and Herth paid out what had been given by these families toward the church. Braunschweig made a last try with the Missourian Pastor Runge. There matters stood when Pastor Kolb arrived directly from Germany. He met Rev. Busse in Haigler on his way out.

Since a close friendship between Pastor Kolb and me developed in the course of time I shall briefly show his experiences in coming to us. They throw an interesting sidelight on church affairs in our country. Pastor Kolb had received instructions from President Gundel to go to Goodland and later on, if possible, also to look up a few Lutherans around St. Francis. Goodland was hardly a field for a man to stay there. Therefore Pastor Kolb came out to St. Francis. 1908 had been a dry season. On October 18th it started to rain and rained till October 20th. The level prairie was a lake and next morning ice was on the water.

The dry sand creeks were turned into rivers. Pastor Kolb came through in a buggy with a youth who suffered from epileptic spasms. This youth dropped him in St. Francis and Pastor Kolb set out to find Mike Raile, the name given him by President Gundel. Not being used to follow so many miles east and so many miles north and so forth, he soon walked north instead of east. As he found out later on he passed quite a few members who were picking potatoes on a field near St. Francis. Before long he was well on his way to Mike Raile Jr. until a good farmer told him that Mike Raile Sr. lived south from where he was. Going south he came to the Republican River at Fallsine's farm. Fallsine told him where Mike Raile lived but did not offer to take the stranger over the river which was bank full and showed ice at the edges. From crossing waters before Pastor Kolb had caught a full sized cold which let him know that most of the walking was done for the day. He decided to swim the river at a place not far from Fallsine's farm. To keep his clothes dry he bound them in a bundle and carried them on his head. Over on the other side of the river he lost direction once more and landed at the Nelson farm. From there he found Mike Raile's place but only after he had decided to spend the night on the prairie when the barking of dogs changed his mind. He tried once more and soon saw the smoke from a friendly chimney. Mrs. Raile almost sent him away, not knowing that he was the pastor whom the congregation expected. But Mr. Raile soon appeared and all was in fine shape, except the Pastor's body. So much better was the spirit. He sung with Mike Raile one song after another till way past midnight. This singing and a cold rendered the young pastor unable to say next morning even "Good morning" to his good hosts, but a good dose of whiskey with an egg in it and the dose repeated helped a great deal. Mike Raile's home was the first place in America where Pastor Kolb took new courage and he never forgot that. This cold was checked by the whiskey but it stayed in the bones until it came out in

winter through double pneumonia. The family John Knorr, with whom the Pastor was staying did all they could. But there was deep snow and no doctor. And Mrs. Knorr was afraid to follow instructions for a cold water cure for the Pastor. It was Mrs. Feikert who came to visit, who followed instructions carefully. The fever was broken and Pastor Kolb is still convinced that Mrs. Feikert saved his life.

All wanted to hear that pastor from Germany. The pastor, due to his cold and due to the heat in his church, had dry lips and evidently moistened them ever so often without knowing it. He found out when after the church, pressed behind the door he overheard John Braunschweig and Herth say: "How did you like Pastor, John?" one asked. "Oh", came the answer, "He is good but he has a peculiar habit; he always plays his tongue over his lips." Pastor Kolb tried from the beginning to get all the people together again into one parish consisting of Salem and Hope. All efforts came to naught because of Braunschweig's demand for a free church. Pastor Kolb in view of the history he knew through Rev. Busse insisted on adopting a constitution. Thus spring 1909, came around and on the side of the Salem Church a new parsonage was in building. On Good Friday, all members of Hope Church, including Braunschweigs, were at Salem. That morning a tragedy took place on Braunschweig's farm. One of the boys, about 12 years old, herded cattle and gave his pony a chance to cut by taking the bit out of the horse's mouth. The end of the bridle rein he wrapped around his wrist. The pony, for an unknown reason, ran off and dragged the poor boy to his death.

It was a sad Braunschweig who brought the sad news over to Knorr's where Pastor Kolb stayed. In a few minutes the church history of our parish had taken a different turn, through the following conversation which I have from Rev. Kolb. Mr. Braunschweig: "Would you bury my boy and also dedicate the cemetery near our church? I am willing but I should ask the others also." Pastor Kolb: "Mr.

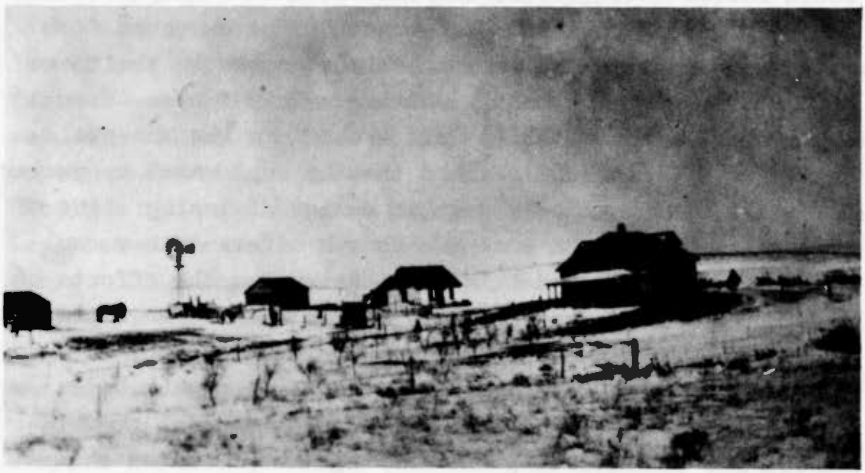
Braunschweig, if you agree, the others will; I am satisfied; you are a man of honor and your word is as good as bond. I shall serve you in this need."

Mr. Braunschweig was as good as his word. And thus the foundation was laid for the growth of the parish. Out of human follies and faults, of members and pastors alike, the Lord of the Church brings about good. This is one of the strongest proofs for the divine character of the Church. There is only one more point to be stated in reference to Pastor Kolb's time. That October 26th, brought not only the first sermon of the first pastor who lived among us, it brought also a very important meeting at the house of David Knorr. The whole congregation was gathered there that very afternoon when John Zweygardt brought Pastor Kolb. I still can see him walking toward the house carrying a satchel of brand new calf's skin. His cheeks still had the ruddy complexion that is so well known in the old country. He carried, one could see that, his body on a strong frame of bones. One would not have guessed that his profession is spiritual. But in the meeting we noticed that, green as he was in American affairs, he knew all about the office of minister. There it was resolved that a parsonage should be built and started as soon as possible. Meanwhile the Pastor was to stay with John Knorr who had room and was willing to host the Pastor. There was, naturally, some speculation as to the future Frau Pastor. An unmarried pastor means trouble or rumor where grown up daughters are around. Pastor Kolb was not as yet aware of this and I performed the first service of friendship, unbeknown to him. I told the mothers that Pastor Kolb is taken care of. His bride is somewhere in Germany since he is not long enough in this country to have found one here. How I did know that? They wanted to know. Whether I had already spoken to the pastor about this? No, I said. But his ring told me, which he did not and could not hide.

Pastor Thiel who succeeded Pastor Kolb did not stay long. He left without having a meeting or telling the congregation. For a long time the congregation was without a pastor till April 8, 1916, when Pastor Zeilinger took charge of the parish. He had but recently married. His young, lovely wife died, however, in the childbed after a little more than one year. The whole congregation was moved to deepest sympathy with the Pastor who had suffered such a blow. After time had healed the wound Pastor Zeilinger found another help-mate who still fills the place that a wife of a minister has to fill in the parsonage.

The terrible war went on. From here too, the young boys were drafted but how was the spirit in the congregation? After the Hindenburg battle the sentiment changed radically. I can't say more. The people have no conviction which they would follow under all circumstances, either in political life, or in church life. A few have to be excepted from this statement. Usually their chief concern is their own big "I", the present bodily welfare. This I have often experienced. About 1936 a wolf broke into the sheepfold. He was a sectarian who claimed that he could heal by prayer. Not a few of our members were in danger of losing sight of the treasure that the Lutheran Church offers in her cool but sound manner. And this notwithstanding the efforts of our good and efficient Pastor. How is this to be explained? Hardly can I believe that people holding the place in our congregation that was their's could get so weak. Names cannot be given. Through sickness and financial trouble mixed with unclear religious feelings they allowed this roving sectarian preacher to bring them to the brink of spiritual disaster. The Evangelical Church lost several members. Pastor Zeilinger, although physically not strong, labored without ceasing, and built on the foundation laid by his predecessor. The congregation grew to such a size that the old church could not properly house it. In a meeting in 1925, the resolution was passed to build a new

church. This resolution was carried out under the building committee: Jakob Zweygardt, A.H. Schauer, David Knorr. Henry Seemann from Kensington was the master builder having John Zweygardt and Jakob Feikart as assistants. The members did the common work. No accident disturbed the undertaking and the church was dedicated on September 19, 1925. The expenses which were ten thousand dollars were more than covered by the pledged donations so that the beautiful new church with its 75 feet high, slim tower had not a single debt against it. This church is a monument of the will power and unity of the congregation. I would call this period the peak of congregational life. After this the spiritual level sank considerably. Was it the fault of the Pastor? By no means. He preached as faithfully as ever. Were the



Home of Georg Isernhagen, 5 1/2 miles west and 1 1/2 miles north of St. Francis. Isernhagen repaired to an upstairs room in the Mid-1930's to write his memoirs.

war years with their riches to be blamed? They contributed in a great measure toward the decline. They gave the opportunity to indulge in luxury, pride, and vanity. And now that the lean years are upon us what do we see? Envy,

strife, rifts in the families and in the church.[18] These two pillars of a Christian nation, family and church, should stand secure. Where to can their undermining lead? Only toward a general chaos. It is this way every where. I have found nothing else. There is no peace, no respect for the holy institution of marriage. The dominant desire is to have a good time, at the expense of others. Irresistibly the word of Dr. Martin Luther comes to my mind: "The gospel is like unto a cloud burst; the Greeks had it, it is gone; the Romans had it, gone and forgotten; done is done and we in America dig our own grave slowly but surely. We live like the people before the flood; leading into marriage and being given into marriage; irrespectively of faith and doctrine. Thus the time creeps on. Imperceptibly but inexorably the end comes nearer and nearer. Again one year has passed away; a few hours and the clock will strike twelve and 1937 will be ushered in. Will it be the last one? I don't know; God will know it. Should it be the last one then there will be room for me too. I come to the close of my life story. I had no desire to show my art of writing or narrating; I have a better reason. Through my story which I have here recorded according to truth I wish to tell everybody who will read it that there is a God and this God is one God made known to us through his only begotten Son, Jesus. So many do not want to believe it. But he guides everyone according to the providence of grace. Whoever has a mind for it may know him. On land and sea he manifests himself. His handiwork may be observed without spectacles and spy glasses. You too, dear reader, meditate on your life. You will agree and exclaim with me: "Praise the Lord

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[18] Isernhagen's assertion that luxury, pride, and vanity were producing envy, strife, and rifts among families and the church during the 1920's and contributing to the weakening of traditional institutions parallels some of analysis presented by Christopher Lasch in Haven in a Heartless World.

and forget not all his benefits. This is what I wish to give you, my six children, for your journey through life. We live by grace for the sake of Christ and through faith in him we shall meet again at the throne of grace.

May God grant my prayer!

Your Father:

Georg Isernhagen

THE LIFE OF A PIONEER GIRL

My father was born in Bookston, Indiana, on a farm, my mother was born at Lafayette, Indiana, also on a farm. I was born October 14, 1873 on a farm one mile from Brookston, Indiana. My Aunt Nan (my father's sister) rode two miles on horseback to bring me a large doll when I was eight years old. I still have the doll. I was named after this aunt Nancy Ellen Moore. On November 25, 1876 my sister Ann was born a sickly little waif of a baby. My father was also sickly; so the doctor advised mother that she should go to a dry, hot climate to save their lives.

Nancy Ellen (Moore) Wieck in the late 1950's.

So in the spring of 1876 my father took a small team of mules pulling a covered wagon or a (Prairy schooner) as they were called and started west. He landed at Concordia, Cloud County, Kansas and found a place to live. Then he wrote for mom to take the other large team of mules and prairie schooner and load all their household in it and come out to him. Mom started out with her two little girls, me 2 1/2 years and my little sister four months old. Mom's brother Henry, his wife, and three small children took their team of mules, prairie schooner and all their household belongings and went with mom out to Kansas, Sunny Kansas, to live and make their fourtain, and to see mom safely through for they were very heavy loaded. When they got in to Missouri the ground was all thawed out and the mud was almost hub deep. It was the stickest mud you ever saw. Mom's team played out, so Mom had to lay over and rest her team and have Dad come back with his team of mules to help her pull through the mud. The only thing I can remember on this trip is pulling up a icy hill after Dad met us and hitched all four mules to the schooner. When the mules slipped and fell down, I was scared for I thought they were dying. Dad took one team up on top of the hill and tied a long rope to the end of the wagon toung and hitched his team to it and pulled us up the hill. From there on we got thru without any extra trouble and, landed in Kansas, sunny Kansas, and settled down on a farm for one year.

Dad's and my little sister's health started to improve right away. But Dad wasn't quite satisfied for he wanted to go farther west in the spring of '77 so, we loaded up our schooner again and moved to Kirwin,[1] Phillips County, Kansas. There we lived two years on a farm. On August 11, 1878, my sister Rhoda was born, while the doctor, my aunt, and my parents were in the house ushering my sister Rhoda into the

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[1]Kirwin is near Phillipsburg and is approximately 140 miles east of St. Francis.

world us children, three coisons went down below the hill and dug a well where we got all the water for our house and the stock. It had just boards laid over it for a cover. So we moved one board and lay down on our stomaches and hollered down to hear the echo. Then my aunt came and got us and tied our hands behind our backs and set us all on a bench on the porch to punish us, for we could of fallen in the well and drounded. We thought that was a terrible punishment.

One evening when we were all in bed Dad called us to get up and get out of doors for there was an earthquake and his idea was to get clear of the house so if it fell it wouldn't fall on us. It was a log house. The quake shook the house until the pans and skillets fell off the wall. It was the custom in those days to have them hanging on the wall. It sounded like two strong men shaking the stove up and down, until the lids were all shook out of place. Two of Dad's cousins who lived in their prairie schooner down below the hill, near the well were playing their violins just before going to bed, when the quake came. They thought their old blind horse had gotten loose and run against the schooner. They hollered, whoe Mollie, for they thought she was going to push them off the bank. About that time another shock came and they jumped out to see about it. Then came another shock more severe than the others so they came up to our house and asked: "Was that an earthquake?" Dad said: "Sure was." Dad said that was an awful bad shock to be so far inland.

In the spring of 1879 dad and mom went farther west to Old Sheridan, in Sheridan County. We moved in with dad's cousin George, and lived there until dad could put his papers on a homestead, and built a house 14 x 16 with poles from the creek. It was part dug out, part sod. Rafters and willows laid on the poles and then sod on top of that for a roof. It very seldom rained but when it did, it rained longer in the house then it did out doors. Our house was

made in the bank of a draw. We lived one mile south of Old Sheridan, which was on the north fork of the Solomon River at the head of the timber. West of us there wasn't even any brush. There was quite a few wild horses that ran in herds of around 25 or 30. We admired especialy a big black stallion for a leader. They got tame enough that they came up within a few hundred feet of our barn. They were all blacks and bays. There was lots of Antelope around our place. They would chase our little dog almost into the door of our house.

One evening Ann and I were in bed sound asleep in a room that was dug in the bank. There was a window opening level with ground in the back of the house that Mom opened for air in hot summer time. There was a clock shelf beside the window above our bed. On the shelf was the clock, a lamp, and some bottles of medicene. Mom was sitting there patching. (Dad was gone from home for a few days.) When Mom heard a noise among the kettles, she looked up and saw a large rattle snake hanging off the end of the shelf flicking his tongue out at us girls, about a foot above our heads. Mom's quick thinking took the broom and moving very cautiously to attract the snake's attention so it would not come on down. Then she put the broom between our heads and the snake's head and made it turn around and go out the window. It was Mom with her quick thinking that saved our lives, for we slept through the whole ordeal. The next morning Mom, Ann, and I found the snake and killed it. It was 11 years old for it had 11 rattles. We lived about three years in this little sod house, on a dirt floor. Then we dug a 10 x 10 room back of the house, in the bank and put a sod roof on it. Then we cut a door through into the house. This room we called our cellar; us girls used it for our bedroom.

One evening cowboys rode in at our house and told us that the Indians were on the war path again. The Indians had come from Oklahoma, and crossed the railroad tracks a

little west of Grainfield. We should all go to the little inland town of Kenneth, so we would be all together to help protect one another in case the Indians did come that way. In Kenneth there was one large empty building that the women and children went into. The men made a circle of wagons around it. (They came from 25 or 30 miles around.) All the cows and horses was put inside this circle. The men was ready with all the guns and ammunition, they had to protect us. The women was going to load all the guns (muzzle loaders). But the Indians passed about three miles west of us. We sat there with our hearts in our mouths until we found they had passed by without knowing that we were there.

My Grandpa Moore came out from Indiana to visit us the night before the Indians went through. He was so scared, he thought we were all going to be scalped for sure. The next day he went back home. He wanted to take Anne and I back with him to Indiana so the Indians wouldn't get us, but the folks wouldn't let us go. When he got home he sent Dad two 10 lb. cans of gun powder, 50 lbs; shot, wads, and caps, and a wad cutter for the muzzle loading shot gun and 25 lbs. of lead to make bullets for the muzzle loading rifle. The bullets for the rifle was just a little larger than buck shot, so Grandpa thought he had us well prepared for the Indians.

On May 28, 1882, my brother James was born, so now there is four of us children. In the fall I was eight and my sister Ann was six years old. We started to school. Our schoolhouse was a sod one room dwelling that had been left standing empty. Our seats were logs hewed flat on one side and pegs put in the lower side to keep them from rolling over when we sat on them. The teacher's desk was a little homemade table 2 x 2 feet. The oldest girl in our school taught the class. She was 16. She was paid $17.00 a month. We had a three month school term; the only book us girls had was an Almanac to learn to read and spell, Dad managed to get us each a slate and a second reader. The teacher put our problems on the

slates so we could learn arithmetic. We had no pencils or paper. There was eight of us with the teacher; the teacher had to come five miles on horseback. When school was out, cattle running loose destroyed the sod house where we had school.

A family moved in about a mile west of us and took a homestead. They had four girls; the youngest, a baby about one year old took very sick. They couldn't get a doctor. The closest Dr. was at Kirwin about 100 miles; so the baby died. There was no casket or lumber to make one; so Dad took the end gates out of his wagon box and made a little coffin. Mom covered it on the outside with calico that she had bought to make us children some dresses and lined it on the inside with white mouslin. Us children pulled buffalo grass with our hands for padding. The mother was crying so hard for she thought she had to bury her baby just wrapped in a blanket which she could hardly spare from the other children. So when Dad brought the little coffin in, she cried with joy, and said, "Oh my baby will have a coffin so the dirt won't have to throwed right on her."

The next year we had to go to school in Sheridan which consisted of a grocery store, a clothing store, Post Office, hotel, and dwelling house all under one L-shaped roof. Dad built it of lumber brought from Kirwin. We thought it was an awful nice large building; the main building was 18 x 30 with the L, 16 x 16. Sleeping quarters for the hotel was upstairs in one room divided off by curtains; the rest was all on the ground floor. We had school in a little building by the windmill that held the barrels for the water supply for the city. It was a 10 x 10 frame building. They moved the barrels out while we had school. The whole city was owned by Mr. Motz. We got a mail carrier who carried the mail between Grainfield and Oberlin. We lived about half way between them. (Thirty-seven miles to Grainfield and 35 to Oberlin.) The mail carrier had two teams of horse and a buck board to carry the mail. Dad took care of his horses

so he would change teams and eat his dinner at our house. There was three small inland towns on his route: Kenneth, Sheridan, Shibeleth.

The summer of 1883, Dad and some of the neighbors built our first real schoolhouse. It was a sod house with a sod roof and the natural buffalo grass floor. Dad made us our first desks and seats out of 1 x 12 inch boards. We had a real graduated teacher by the name of Miss Toothaker. The population had grown until we had 14 children in school. We sure was proud of our new schoolhouse and the desks. We all got books and slates and a black board made of boards and painted black. On April 13, 1884, my sister Esther was born. Us girls thought she was the nicest sister anyone ever had.

That summer Old Sheridan had a real building boom. There was two hotels, two dry goods and grocery stores, a bank, a blacksmith shop, a Dr.'s office, post office, a livery barn, and about a dozen families. Now we had to have a larger schoolhouse, for there was about 50 children to go to school. We built a pretty large schoolhouse with a bell on top, we went just one term in that schoolhouse; a cyclone blew it clear away. The only thing left on the school ground was the bell. It blew nearly the whole town away. There was no one killed but there was several hurt. It blew our windmill down on top of our house and made several holes in the roof. We sure were scared. We thought it was going to take the roof off of our house but it didn't.

In the summer of 1885, we built another frame schoolhouse, but not near as pretty or nice as the other one. (The town built all up again.) In this schoolhouse there were 52 children in all grades. Two of the girls graduated from this as teachers. One evening after school had let out, we were still on the school grounds. A boy caught me and kissed me. I slapped him as hard as I could. The teacher saw me hit him; so she called us back and asked me why I had slapped Eaton. I said he kissed me; so she said she didn't

blame me and that I could go on home but Eaton should stay, as she wanted to speak to him. He never tried that again. I was 13 years old then, I remember it well for there wasn't any of the girls that liked Eaton. He was just a big bully and thought he could get by with anything.

On November 28, 1888, my little brother Charley was born. In the spring of 1888, the Rock Island Railroad came through Sheridan county and started the town of Selden seven miles northwest of old Sheridan. On the fourth of July it had gotten as far west as Goodland. I and my sister Ann and boyfriend (who was John Wieck) rode on the first passenger train from Selden to Colby to celebrate the fourth. We thought we were really riding fast, for it was my first train ride. But only every other tie was nailed most of the way; so the train had to go slow. The contract called for the track to be laid as far Goodland by the fourth of July. In order to accomplish that they didn't have time to nail all the ties. In this same year my Dad (Riley Moore) and my boyfriend (John Wieck) moved all the buildings from old Sheridan to Selden.[2] (Thus, old Sheridan went out of existence and Selden came in its place.) It was quite an undertaking to move the buildings across the Prairie Dog River as there was no bridges.

My boyfriend, John Wieck came across the ocean from Germany in January 1881, on an old wooden ship. He arrived at Omaha, Nebraska February 2, 1881. He had an aunt there. In June his father, mother, three brothers and three sisters came across; John was 17 years old when he came across. Him and his folks lived on a farm near Omaha for five years. Then they moved out near Kenesaw, Nebraska on a farm. When the folks were all settled on their farm John came from Kenesaw to Oberlin, Kansas in the spring of 1886, and put his papers on a homestead. In the fall he came out to see his homestead. As it happened it was in the same section as

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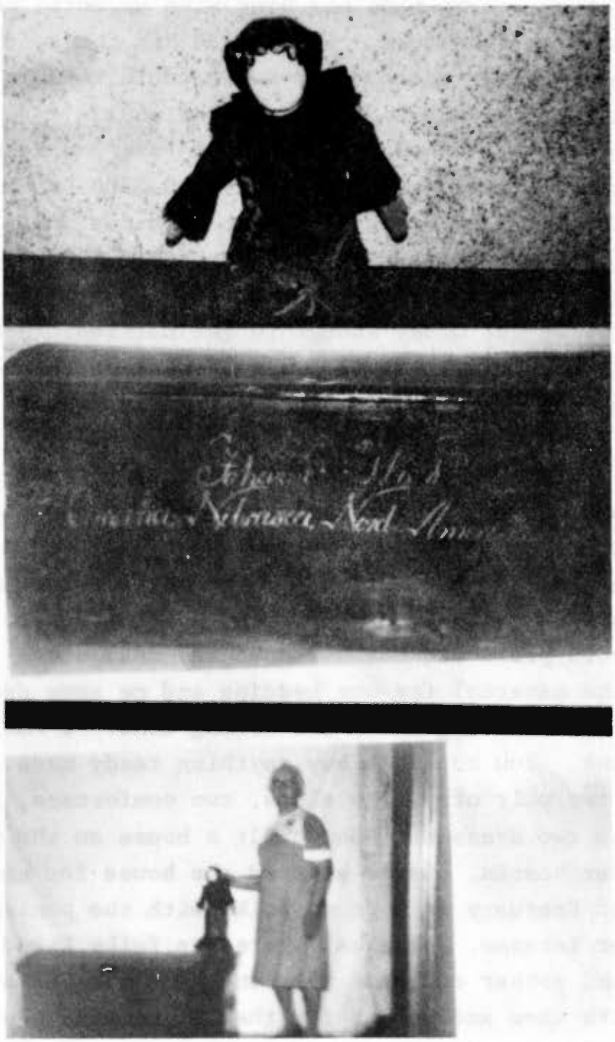
[2]Selden is near Hoxie and is approximately 90 miles southeast of St. Francis.



Top: Doll given to Nancy Ellen Moore in 1873 by her aunt Nan when Nancy was eight days old. Middle: The trunk in which this memoir was found. It was brought from Germany by John Wieck in January, 1881. Note the Inscription--"Johann Wieck, Omaha, Nebraska, Nord America." Bottom: Dora (Wieck) Neitzel holding her mother's doll on the trunk in the museum room of Dora's home in St. Francis.

our homestead; so he made his home with us until he could make himself a sod house. Dad helped him for he didn't understand how to plow sod to build so he could live on the homestead long enough to prove up. He couldn't talk anything but German; so we taught him to talk and read English. At the end of three years John borrowed $500.00 on the homestead and took $200 of the $500 and paid out on it. (That's what we call pre-empting). With the other $300 he had left he bought a team of ponies and harness and a wagon. Now we thought we had money enough to get married. John was 25 and I was 15; so we went to Hoxie, Kansas, with the ponies and wagon and was married by Probate Judge Wanzer. We had to take Dad and Mom along to give their consent. It was on Janaury 3, 1889. There was little skifts of snow all over the ground and it was real cold to drive with a team of horses 13 miles to town and back.

When we got home about midnight one sister Ann had baked us a three layer cake for our wedding supper. Ann was only 13 years old but her cake was real nice. John had to buy the material for our bedding and me some dresses. It took me a month to get all the sewing done. I had to make everything. You couldn't buy anything ready made. Two sheets, two pair of pillow slips, two comforters, a straw tick, and two dresses. John built a house on the wagon out of weather boards. Later we used the house for coal. The second of February we left my folks with the ponies and wagon for Kenesaw, Nebraska, where his folks lived. His father and mother couldn't talk anything but German. We lived with them and worked for them 11 months. We rented 23 acres of ground and planted it to corn, then picked it and hauled it four miles to town and shoveled it into a crib for nine cents a bushel. It made about 30 bushels to the acre. This corn was all we got for our 11 months work. The first of January, 1890, we went back to my folks on the train to Selden, Kansas.

Dad had traded his homestead for 22 head of cattle and sold them, and was preparing to move. In February, 1890, Dad went back to Indiana to visit my Grandpa Moore, his father, who had a Canser in his ear. It was the first time he had been back to Indiana since he left in 1876. His father died shortly after Dad left. Dad went to Nevada, Missouri, where two of his sisters lived and rented a 10 acre farm for himself and family. John and I helped Mom move back. We used three teams of two prairie schooners and a spring wagon. We left Selden the 8th of March, and got to Nevada the 25th of March. We went by Hays, Kansas, where my Grandpa Kartain lived. (Mom's father). We stayed there two days to visit Grandpa. On this trip there was John and I, Mom, three sisters, Ann, Rhoda, Esther, two brothers James, and Charley and Ann's boyfriend Clark Hutchinson, who later became Ann's husband. We all got there in fine shape.

In April 23, 1890, our little daughter Mary Amanda arrived but she didn't stay with us long. God called her home on May 4, 1890. We left her there in the Nevada Cemetery. Then John left June 16 and went back to his folks at Kenesaw, Nebraska and rented us an 80 acre farm. While John was gone I stayed with my folks. Esther got sick and had diptheria in a light form; didn't know what she had until Ann, Rhoda, James, Clark, and I all got the Diptheria. Then little Charley died with the black Diptheria 12 hours after he took sick.[3] The rest of us took sick the same day. We laid Charley at the side of little Mary in the Nevada cemetery, August 28, 1890. The rest of us all got well again.

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[3]Diptheria is a severe, contagious disease in which a false membrane grows over the mucous membrane, usually in the nose or throat. The false membrane may obstruct the nose or throat so that the victim cannot breathe. Diptheria epidemics swept western Europe and the United States during the late 1800's. Since 1890 the number of cases sharply declined.

Then I got the malaria fever and the ague.[4] I never got well until I went back to that good climate and sunshine of Nebraska. Then John wrote for me to come back to him, the people had moved out of the house. So I left Nevada September 29, 1890, got back to Kenesaw Nebraska, and my dear husband.

We began housekeeping on the 30th of September 1890. Our first home to ourselves. It sure seemed good to be by ourselves, although I was so sick that I couldn't walk alone for three months. Our house was two rooms partly dug into a bank, with front built of sod, root cellar and barn which was also dug into the bank. It was an honest to goodness frame cowshed on 80 acres of land. To us it was a beautiful farm. I was soon strong enough to help John with the farm work as well as to take care of my tiny home. I do my weekly wash on the wash board, bake our bread and churn the cream which was hand scum from the milk into butter, as well as hoe and tend the garden in which we raised our supply of potatoes for the year and a 50 bushel wagon load of cabbage. John sowed oats by hand while I cultivated it.

For furniture we had a wood bedstead with slats, no springs and a tick full of corn shucks; a kitchen range which cost us $14 brand new; and a small drop leaf table and two chairs. John's sister who was 10 years old came to live with us because we lived near school. If she lived at home she would have four miles to walk to school. For the next 10 years Maggie made her home with us and helped me with the children to pay her keep.

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[4]Malaria is a severe, infectious disease. It occurs most often in tropical and sub-tropical countries, but can appear in temperate regions during summer months. The word means bad air. People gave this disease this name because of its association with the musty, bad-smelling air of swamps. Malaria is caused by parasites which are carried by mosquitoes. A person who has malaria suffers intense attacks of chills, fever, sweats, and great weakness. For many years the only known cure was quinine which has been replaced by modern drugs. Ague is a fever of malarial character.

On August 26, 1891 our little son John Henry came to brighten our little home. He was a healthy little fellow and just what it took to make life interesting. When he was three months old we moved to a 160 acre farm with a four room house. Now we must have more room for crops for we expected to have more mouths to feed as time went by. Sure enough the following August 13, 1892, a little brother William Riley came to John Henry as a playmate. Following in quick succession was a little black haired girl, Margaretha Doretha on October 4, 1893. Three children in diapers; 75 of them which I had to scrub, rinse and hang up to dry twice a week. Never a dull moment. Work all day and sew far into the night by a sputtering kerosene lamp. I had to sew every stitch of clothing the children wore. As well as my husband and I. And then Joseph Walter was born on February 11, 1895 in a black blizzard (a black blizzard is one where the snow and dirt both blow.) We couldn't get any help; so me and my husband had to fight the ordeal out by ourselves. A little delicate four pound boy came. The next day when the storm had let up John went and got a neighbor woman to come over the finish washing and dressing our little boy. He was so small that his whole body would go into a number three tomatoe can. The lady that washed him said he was the smallest baby she ever saw. We had to pin him on a pillow so we wouldn't hurt him. He grew to be my largest boy. Little blond, blue eyed boy George Arthur came on May 1, 1896.

In summer we planted an acre of potatoes and raised a little over 100 bushels of potatoes. When we dug them they would only pay us six cents a bushel for them. We had to carry them down in the cellar and take the money out in trade. We made a storage cave and put them in it. Early in the spring a hard freeze came and froze all the potatoes in the country. But ours never froze. So we sold them for 65 cents a bushel.

That fall we butchered 300 pound hogs, cut them up, made a lot of sausage, salted the meat and then hung it in the smoke house to smoke. One night the dogs got the smoke house door open and carried all the meat away except a few pieces that they couldn't reach. We had to buy whatever meat we had for the next year. That was hard for we lived on a 160 acre farm. (Seventeen acres pasture, five acres for the building place, the rest we farmed.) Didn't have very good crops those years; had to pay one-third rent. We wanted a large family; so on the 17th of May 1898, we welcomed our third little girl Rhoda Elzina, to our home. My clothesline stretched for miles and I did all the washing by hand on the wash board. Now there was eight of us. During those struggling years we managed to save $500.

The place we lived on was sold; so we must find another home. As there was no place in the neighborhood to rent we had to buy. Not far away was a 40 acre tract; the only spot available to us with our limited buying power. While the acres were few, the house had five rooms and the buildings were such that we had better protection for our livestock and room for storage of feed and grain. We bought this farm in the fall of 1898. The 40 acre farm belonged to John's father and mother; they sold us the farm. They thought that they were getting too old to farm; that they could go out west and take a homestead and live on it five years and then it would be theirs. That way they would be making some money. They came out to Cheyenne County Kansas where their oldest daughter lived. They knew of a nice level place with a two room sod house, a sod barn for four horses and a well, which somebody had homesteaded but couldn't make a go of and had pulled up and left. Their time had run out on the place; so John's father put his homestead papers on it, and a windmill on the well to get water. All these ten years Maggie was my helper. I did her sewing and gave her a home. (Maggie was my husband's

sister.) She worked out whenever she could get work as work was scarce then. She had a little money saved up which came in real handy. But now she was 20 years old. Roy B. had been calling on her quite regularly for the past year. I could see that little Dan Cupid was at work; so plans were made and on May 3, 1899, our Maggie became Mrs. Roy B. We made her a real nice wedding dinner at our house. Since she had helped me so much with our children we gave her our best milk cow for a wedding present. In the fall of 1899 my husband's brother's wife had a pair of twin boys (premature). I went over and took care of her and the babies. They were frail little boys, weighing 3 and 2 1/2 lbs. The smallest one lived only about six hours and the other one lived three weeks. If we only had incubators for delicate babies then, we could of saved his life. Little did I know that this was the starting of my career as a practical nurse.

We welcomed our little Lucy Clara to our home on February 27, 1900, a frail little might of a girl. Though she was never strong she was a happy little thing with a smile for everyone. Then on July 4, 1900, Maggie's little girl Clara Ellen arrived. I got to show what I could do as a practical nurse. I ushered little Clara into the world without a doctor. When Maggie saw her little girl, she said to me; "Would you take my baby and raise her as your own, if anything should happen to me?" I said yes I sure would. But there isn't anything going to happen to you, a young healthy girl. She said, "Oh you never can tell." Then I said: "Well you know where you are putting her, for you have lived with us for the last ten years." Then she said, "And I am satisfied."

The summer of 1900 John's mother came to see if we wouldn't come out and stay with them. We found that we couldn't make a living on such a small place; so we rented it to John's brother George for three years, at $100 a year. John's other brother Claus owned the other three fourths of

this quarter section and always wanted to buy our 40. So when George's time was up we sold to Claus. On November the 7th 1900 we loaded an emmigrant car, and landed at Wheeler, Kansas on the evening of the 8th. Moved in with John's father until we could build us a sod house near father's windmill so we could get water for our house use and the ten head of cattle we brought with us. There was plenty of grassland all around us for there wasn't many people out here. But it was so dry that we couldn't plow sod to build us a house. Father's house was two rooms, a bedroom 12 x 14 and a kitchen 14 x 16. We had seven children, the oldest nine years, the youngest seven months. With $200 we bought 80 bushels potatoes, 100 pounds of flour, meat enough for all winter, 100 fence posts, a two year old horse; wagon and harness besides the ten head of cattle in our emmigrant car.

In the 1890's they changed the law, so that anybody that had preempted or paid out on their homestead before that time could take another homestead. John took another homestead in January 1901. During this time we had moved away from John's folks into an old one room frame house. It was such an old shack that we nearly froze to death. We were closer to school, only 3/4's of a mile. It was better for the children. As soon as John got his papers on the homestead, which was three miles south of where we lived, he started to dig a dugout for us to live in. Now he had to have another horse, so John's brother-in-law claimed a water right on our homestead, and sold us an old grey mare and the right corner homestead for $100. John took enough money from the other $100 to make a roof and three small windows and a door on our dugout. We moved into it on January 31, 1901. Now we had to have a well. We hired a well digger to come and make us a well. Two men came with an oger and started the well. They got down about 35 feet. The hole was so crooked that they couldn't get the casing down; so had to start another well.

They got that well down about 40 feet. There was a rock stuck out on one side and they couldn't get the rock out; so had to leave that well. They went home and came back with a power drill. Started the third well; they went down 97 feet and that well was a good one. It had 52 foot of water. They worked the month of February until the 22nd of March to get that well and boarded with us nearly all that time. Thev had eaten up nearly everthing we had.

By morning it was snowing and blowing so hard that you couldn't see across the road. That storm lasted for three weeks. There wasn't anybody who could get to town all that time. Several of our neighbors had to grind broom corn seed in the coffee mill to make pancakes from to live on. We still had a half slice of bread for the baby, when John's brother-in-law got to town and brought us a sack of flour, and some syrup. Everybody's cattle had drifted away in the storm. Very few had milk or butter. There was a string of cattle for 50 miles. We were about in the center of the string. Some were dead and some were still standing when the storm was over. The snow was knee deep to a horse all over the prairie. We lost one cow and three calves. Everybody was out as soon as they could get around, hunting up their cattle. Them that were dead they skinned and sold their hides for a few dollars. We had nothing to burn, so we took one fence post a day to cook with and warm the house a little. The rest of the time we stayed in bed to keep warm during the storm.

Now it was spring; had to do something to make a little money. We had to have a windmill pump so we could pump water by hand for our house use. We got 15 head of cattle to herd and water, at 15 cents a month. The two oldest boys, 9 and 10 years went out to herd cattle for other people at $3 a month or less than 10 cents a day and room and board. We lived off of that and made a 280 barrel cistern, so we would have plenty water for the cattle.

During the summer we built a 14 x 16 sod room. We moved into the sod house the day before Christmas. The children all played bussy wants a corner that evening. Now we had a board floor, and it seemed so nice. But in the morning little frail Lucy was sick. She was sick most of the night. We were still sleeping in the dugout, as it was Christmas morning. John got up and made a fire in the house with cow chips to make it warm so we could take Lucy to see what was the matter with her. We saw that she was real sick. I sent John to get a neighbor that was real good in sickness. She couldn't tell what was the matter, so she wrote everything on how she (Lucy) acted. We sent a man on horseback 15 miles to the doctor with the description of the case. When the doctor read it he said she had spinal mengitus,[5] and there was no help for her. So he never came out to see our baby. God called another one of our darling babies home on December 27th, 1901. She was 22 months old the day she died. We laid our little Lucy to rest in the Lawn Ridge Cemetery.

1902 went a little better. Now that spring is here again, we got 180 head of steers to herd. Had to have another big tank. The steers would drink more than one tank of water. We kept them from the first of May until the first of November at 15 cents a month a head. The two oldest boys herded cattle again. During the summer, at $10 a month, John broke out 25 acres on our homestead and planted it to feed. We had plenty for our stock and built a frame barn for shelter.

During the fall John laid the cow chips out of the corell, dried them, and then hauled them into a pile so that

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[5]Meningitis is a disease of the coverings of the brain and spinal cord. It may be caused by a variety of micro-organisms. The development of sulfa drugs and a variety of antibiotics has increased the chances of recovery from meningitis. Spinal meningitis is merely one form of the disease. Other forms, which are still fatal among infants, include pneumonial, tubercular, and influenzal.

when winter came we had a pile of cow chips higher than the house. One day a man came on horse back hunting some of his cattle that had strayed away. When he saw that pile of cow chips he got off his horse and walked several times around the pile. Then he came to the door and told me that he would give $100 if that pile of cow chips was in his yard. We felt pretty proud of our pile of chips.

Now it is fall and the boys are home. Five of our children are going to school. The two oldest boys will work out at the same places as soon as school is out, for $12 a month each. John will break out more of our land and plant some corn and the rest to feed. We have two more horses to put in the barn and also have more cattle. Will have to have more barn room. We are raising our own cattle and horses. John built another barn larger than the other one. The boys are home to go to school. On the 29th of October we welcomed our little girl Lena Esther to our home. We are settled for the winter. Children in school, John to care for the stock, and I with my new baby washing, ironing, cooking, sewing.

The spring of 1904 has rolled around.

Another summer ahead of us. We still live in our 14 x 16 room. We will build two rooms on to the house this summer 14 x 14 each. We got the two rooms built in our house. The old sod schoolhouse fell down this summer. We have six children to go to school and we are the only family in the school district. We moved all of the school furniture out of the old school house into one room of our house. Hired a teacher for $22 a month. She paid us $5 a month board and slept in the school room. Three boys from adjoining districts that had no school, came to our school. That made nine pupils in our school. Everybody was happy. Our little Esther was just starting to walk when school started. If she was left alone for a minute she would go to the school room door and hit on the door. Teacher would let her in. When I came back, there's where I would find

her. Lying on her stomach in the middle of the floor as contented as she could be, teacher would say: "I have a visitor today, I have to let her in when she knocks at the door even though she is so small."

John and I did the cooking. We set the table three times a day for 10 people. John's folks still lived on their homestead. We all seemed to be getting along fine until John's father took sick one evening. Their daughter went over to see the folks. Father had said: "I told you I would tell you when I needed help, I am sick. We need help; so you and Ellen come over tomorrow and clean up the house. Mother has been taking care of me. She has gotten behind with her work. I wish you would come over and clean it up good once." The next morning when we got there about 10:00 to clean up the house, he was dead. Mother said he just went to sleep about sun up and never woke up. This was February 17, 1905. We laid him to rest in the Lawn Ridge Cemetery along side of his oldest daughter Katie. That was his last request. Lena said, "Now what's going to become of Mother." I said, "Some of us will have to take her home with us. She can't live alone so far from everybody." Lena said, "I can't take her." I said, "I don't see how I can take her, for there is ten of us now, and school in one room." It's a cinch she can't stay here alone. I have always said it makes no difference if our house is small. There is always room for one more. So on the 19th of February, 1905 mother came to make her home with us. She said she was satisfied to come and live with us, for I know you will be good to me. Now mother had less than $100 left of the money they got when they sold their 40 acres of land for back in Nebraska.

After father's funeral, when school was out, we built her a 14 x 16 sod house, so she would have a place she could call her own, away from our children. It was about 50 feet from our house. John plowed her a little spot of ground for a garden and some potatoes so she would have something to

do. She did spend lots of time in her garden. Everything seemed to grow awful nice, and it made her very happy. During the summer John and I built another sod schoolhouse. We took the school furniture and put it into the new soddie. That gave us a little more room to spread out at home. The children have only two miles to go to school now instead of two and a half, and mother has her little house now; so everybody is happy again. On July 25, 1905, I went over to Shan's and ushered a little boy in for them. I have forgotten his name. On November 16, 1905, I ushered Ralph Lehman into the world. On December 16, 1905 another little girl came to make her home with us. We called her Alfrieda Alice our sixth girl. Mother proved up on her homestead. In February 1906, mother sold her homestead for $1300 for food and clothing. She kept $1000 and gave us $300 for her board during this time and other things that she owed us. During the summer we bought 80 acres of land joining ours for $500. In spring John sowed 50 acres of barley by hand and cultivated it in. When it got ripe we cut it with a binder and bound it in bundles. There wasn't any thrashing machines in the country; so we hauled it up and stacked it in our feed yard. Spring of 1907 we sowed 140 acres of wheat, oats, and barley and planted 15 acres of corn. It all grew good. Then we broke out 50 acres of sod on our 80 and planted it to cain for feed. The 14th of July, 1907, we proved up on our homestead. The next day was Sunday. Monday we were going to start cutting our grain, but Sunday afternoon hail came and pounded it into the ground until you couldn't see there had been anything planted. The cain looked like it was all gone, but it came out and made $55 worth of feed. The girls went over to visit a neighbor that always thought that I dressed my girls so nice. She said, now your mother won't be able to dress you girls so nice since you hailed out. But during the year I had picked up remnants at the store for 50 cents to a $1 a piece for the three girls. The 4th girl got a

dress from the scraps of the other girls dresses, so they looked nicer than before. They had always had five cents a yard calico for their dresses, for I was very good at cutting and sewing. My girls did look nice in their calico dresses. Another neighbor man asked me what my oldest girl's dress cost. I told him it cost $1 for the dress goods and $1 for the trimming. He said who wouldn't dress nice, if they could have a nice dress like that for $2 but it isn't everybody that can sew like you.

The 21st of November 1907, I ushered another little girl into the home of the Chaffins. On February 2, 1908, I attended the arrival of a little girl into the Kiser family and on March 24, 1908, a little boy came to our house to make his home until he is 21 years old. He had the blackest eyes you ever saw. He sure was well cared for with all his big sisters and brothers, and of course his dad and mom. We named him Roy Raymond. On August 20, 1908, I ushered a little boy into the Keller home. They named him George Howard. In the fall of 1909 we sold our homestead and our 80 for $1900. We stayed on the place for another year and put the crop out for the other man. On February 25, 1910, another dear little boy came to brighten our home, little Floyd Bertrand. He was a frail little boy. Now we had a family of 12 boys and girls. After John and the boys got the man's crop planted, him and the two oldest boys went back to Kenesaw, Nebraska to help John's brother harvest. John said, now when we get back from harvesting, then we will load our emigrant car and move to Alberta Canada. I said, I don't see how we can make the long trip on the train with your mother and our sickly baby. There was a nice 320 acres of land that lay one mile north of our homestead. I always said that if we had that land I would never want to move again. So while John was gone I thought I would write to this man and see if he would sell and what he would take for it. We had tryed to buy it before and it wasn't for sale. The day John and the boys came home from

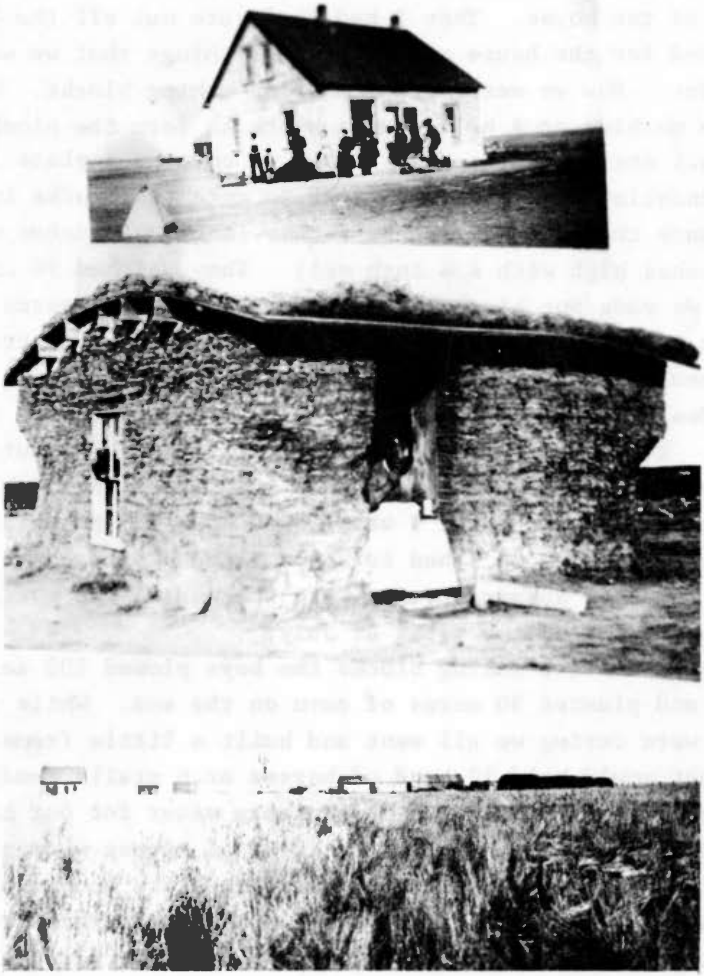
Nebraska there was a letter in the mail box from this man. I had sent a self-addressed envelope so he would answer. John said, what's this, a letter to me in your handwriting. I said, I wrote to Gerlinger to see if he would sell that land. Let's see what it says. He said he would take $3600 for the half section. So we bought it and payed $100 down. Put a mortgage on the land for the rest of the money and paid cash. This was the summer of 1910.

We started building right away. We had to move in the spring as it was rented to another man. We asked mother what kind of a house she wanted; cement block, or frame house, or sod. She said a sod house. A frame house will blow away, and a block house might fall down. So we built mother a 14 x 16 sod house so we could have a place to cook for the men while they made our well. We put up our own windmill. We built the tower, put the windmill on it, then pulled it up with a team of horses. Now we had water, and a little house to live in. (Henry, Riley and Dora had graduated from the 8th grade and was out of school now.) So we put Dora up there in the house to cook for the boys and dad, and to keep Esther (7) and Alice (5) and send them to school. It was only one-fourth of a mile to school. Dad and the boys put a fence around 200 acres of the land. He has 32 head of cattle, 13 of them were milk cows, 6 head of horses, 6 hogs and 100 bared rock chickens.

Our frail little Floyd took sick with spinal menengitus. On December 12, 1910 God called another one of our darling babies home. He was 9 1/2 months old. We laid him to rest in the new Lutheren Valley Church Yard. He was the first one in that cemetery. I drew a plan for a 12 x 14 frame chicken house. Dora came back down to the old home to keep house for part of the family, while I and my next oldest boy, Riley went up to the little house and built the chicken house. Meanwhile dad and the rest of the boys hauled sand up from the creek that ran through our old homestead to make blocks to build our house. They hauled up a

pile of sand as big as mother's little house. Everybody said it looks like you tried to haul the whole creek up here, for it did look like an offle big pile of sand.

It is spring of 1911. The cnicken house is finished and school is out. We have to move off our old home place. It is rented. We will have to move Mother into the schoolhouse. The rest of us move into mother's little house and the chicken house. There were 11 of us and mother. We had to get a tent that we could put three beds in. We made a 10 acres pasture north of the house for calves so we could get the calves away from the cows when we wanted to wean them. Now we are ready to start building on the house. But we had to have a place to dry our blocks, for if we put them out in the sun they would dry too fast and crumble. So we made the foundation first 16 inches wide, 24 inches deep, 30 feet square and one cross foundation. It took 4300 lbs. of cement and five times that much sand. We covered the foundation with straw and put lots of water on it to cure the cement. We had to have more money; so we borrowed $1,000 from John's brother back in Nebraska. We also had to have water handier for we saw we were going to need lots of water to cure all those blocks we were going to make. So we dug a cisteren just outside of the house and cemented it all out. Put a little hand pump in it and piped the water from the windmill into it. I made the blue print for the house, four rooms downstairs and a large closet, and two large rooms upstairs. Made out my lumber bill, ordered it from Sears Roebuck at Kansas City. It was a car load. It came from Alabama. When it got to Wheeler Kansas, it has been broken open and some of the lumber was taken. We had 12 miles to haul it with horses and wagons. It took two days to haul it home. My husband went up to Wheeler and loaded the wagons and stayed all night in the car. I stayed home and unloaded the wagons and figured out what lumber was gone. There was only a little over $8 worth missing. That car load of lumber cost $300. I had



Top: cement block house (28' x 28' x 25') built by John and Ellen Wieck, 1911-1913. Eleven members of the Wieck family are pictured here. Middle: Grandmother Margaretha Wieck's "soddy" (14' x 16') built in 1910 by her son, John. Bottom, left to right: unplastered frame house (12' x 14') built Spring 1911, later a chicken house; Grandmother Wieck's "soddy" (see middle); square bin and round tin granary; windmill; two small sheds; long stable in which the family lived one cold winter; stacks of feed. The last third of Ellen's story covers struggling to survive the 1911 crop failure and building the block house.

to order all the mill work by local freight to finish the inside of the house. Then I had to figure out all the blocks we needed for the house and some other things that we wanted block for. Now we were ready to start making blocks. We hired a machine at a half cent a block to form the blocks in. Mixed all the cement by hand. Then we covered a place in the foundation with boards 12 x 28 to cure the blocks in as we made them. They were 32 inches long by 4 inches wide by 8 inches high with a 4 inch wall. They weighed 90 lbs. each. We made our blocks and put them under the boards to let the cement set so we could pile them up and put straw over them so we could put lots of water on them to cure them. Our oldest girl Dora did the cooking and I helped with the blocks. You know it is awful hard to get along without a good boss and I do make a good boss. At least, I think so. My husband always thought I was a good boss for he said you say and I'll do. I had to stop making blocks long enough to usher Susanna Louisa into the world. We got all our blocks done by the first of July.

While we were making blocks the boys plowed 100 acres of sod and planted 30 acres of corn on the sod. While the blocks were curing we all went and built a little frame barn that would hold 12 head of horses or 6 stalls, and dug a stock cistern so we would have plenty water for our cattle and horses. Now it is about the first of August we must go to laying blocks. School is going to start soon; so we will have to move mother out of the schoolhouse into her own little house. And we will have to move our kitchen and two beds into the chicken house. There is a little one room house down behind the hill a half mile away. We put Dora down there to cook for the six school children, one of the big boys, and Roy who was too young to go to school. She did the washing and baked the bread for the whole family. My husband and I and the two big boys lived in the chicken house. We never raised a hand full of anything on the sod this summer. We could carry every weed and everything that

grew on the 100 acres in one arm. We didn't have any feed for our stock; only two big stacks of straw three years old. It was an awful bad winter, lots of snow.

We layed the last block on that house Thanksgiving day. We built the walls and the gable clear to the top with the blocks. It was 24 feet from the ground to the top of the gable. We started to put the roof on. Then our fourth boy Arthur took sick and I took him to the doctor December 14. The doctor said he had Diabetus. We didn't know what he meant for he told us not to send him to school anymore. In two weeks he passed away.[6] That was December 28. We had no undertaker or ambulances at that time; so we had to lay Arthur out in the chicken house, and send one of our neighbors to get the casket. The snow was knee deep to the horses. The neighbors took four horses and a sled, and went to get the casket. It took them two days. It was 15 miles to town. We layed him to rest in the Lutheran Valley Cemetery. In four months he would of been 16 years old. We hauled him in the sled with four horses 4 1/4 miles to the cemetery. We also rode in a sled. He was a big boy. He measured 6 feet 1 inch. His favorite song was "Will There be Any Stars in my Crown". We missed him so much, but we had to go on and work for the rest of the family. On January 15, 1912, I had to stop my work and help welcome George Everett into the world. Now it is

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[6]Diabetes is the name for two diseases that have the same symptom, excessive urination. The more common of the two occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough of the hormone insulin. When this occurs the body cannot use or store sugar normally. The successful preparation of insulin for human use was not developed until the 1920's. Although mild cases of diabetes can be controlled by careful diet alone, the more severe cases require insulin and careful diet. The other form of diabetes results when the rear portion of the pituitary gland does not function normally. This is characterized by excessive passing of urine and loss of water. It cannot be cured, but can be controlled through injections of the hormone vasopressin.

the middle of February 1912. We have the roof on the house. When Arthur was so sick we took mother over to one of John's brothers so we could have her little house for our sick boy. We couldn't keep him warm in the chicken house. The rest of the children were all nice and warm in the little house down behind the hill from our house. We had the roof on our house but no windows or doors in yet. Brother George began to complain that he couldn't get along with Mother for she was so fussy. Didn't get along with his wife either. He said, you have to take her back. All we could do was to take the 12 common sized windows and the big picture window all in and chop about two feet of snow and ice out from under the floor and go to laying the floor. As fast as the floor was layed we moved in. We got all moved in the 29th of February, 1912. There was no partitions or upper floor. The house was all in one room 28 foot square. Only a cook stove to warm it with and not too much fuel but Mother got back in her little house and she was happy again.

March was an awful cold month. We would all get up and make a good fire and get breakfast and send the children to school, Dora, I and little Roy would go back to bed to keep warm until the children came back from school in the evening. Then we would make a good fire and get supper and all go to bed again. John and the two big boys would go out to the cow barn and sit on one cow and put their feet on another one to keep warm, or work on the doors. There were three outside doors with boards stood up against them to keep the cold out. By the last of March we had the door and windows all in, and all the steading in. Now we were out of money and out of food. We were living on potatoes and bread with lard for butter, and coffee.

Now it is spring and there is plenty work back in Nebraska where John's brother lives. I told John he is our daddy and that I would take care of everything here at home and farm the 100 acres that the boys broke out last summer.

Him and the three big boys should go work out and pay the tax and interest for we were behind on both of them and a $150 store bill. He said, how will we git back to Nebraska without any money? Well, I am school treasurer and if I can get that $8 state allotment then I will have enough to pay the teacher the last month's salary will will have enough left to pay your's and Henry's tickets back there, a little over $7 each. Then you can borrow that much from your brother and send it back to me. In two weeks will be the school election. They might put me out and I will have to have the money to give to the new treasurer. He said, alright, but I think I should sell the cattle so you won't have so much work. I said, no don't sell the cattle for it is spring now and we have a good pasture.

Our cattle were very poor. We were milking six cows, which gave 1/2 gallon of milk altogether. Four of them we had by the tail to steady them so they could get up. We called that tailing them up. John went to town a few days before he left for Nebraska. Saw his brother-in-law and told him he could have the 22 head of cattle for the mortgage that was against them ($220) and also three turkeys. Then he told me I shouldn't buy any high priced potatoes and plant them, and I shouldn't buy any pigs. On March 29, I packed Daddy's (John) and Henry's suitcases and took them to town and sent them off to Nebraska. They made their headquarters at John's brother Claus. They each got work in two or three days on farms at $25 a month. During that time Riley, our second boy, got a job on a farm near home at $20 a month. He worked for two farmers, so that if one couldn't keep him busy the other one could. Just a few days after Daddy left for Nebraska his brother-in-law came driving into our yard in his car like the king of England. Well I came to get the cattle. I told him there is four of the cows so poor and weak that you have to tail them up when they lay down. Will you take them to? He said, no I won't buy dead cattle. I said, alright I am boss here now since John

is gone so you don't get any of the cattle. He said, do I get the turkeys, I said yes if you can catch them. I knew he couldn't catch them. I bought two bushels of shelled corn and gave each cow one big mouth full of corn each morning before they went out to pasture until the corn was gone; you had no idea how much good that done them cows. By the time the corn was gone they could get up by themselves. I bought one bushel of seed potatoes and took one bushel of our eating potatoes. Walter and I planted them and a nice little garden on Good Friday, April 5.

All our machinery was four horse machines. We had four work horses and two colts ready to break to work. During the winter we had to sell one team to pay part of our boy's funeral and to get some coal to burn. There was so much snow on the ground that we couldn't find dow chips; so had to buy coal. Now we have only one work team and two colts, one of them had never had the harness on. This colt was part bronco, so we were a little afraid we would have trouble breaking her. But it was up to Walter and I to break her. (Walter was 16 years old). We got busy right away and broke the colts. Had a little fun getting the bronco tamed so we could drive her. Now we were ready to start farming. One of the old team had the distemper and a boil on her breast as big as a gallon bucket. We couldn't put a collar on her for a month. When we lanced the boil a full quart of puss ran out of it. Then I had to pour proxide into the sore to disinfect it for several days before we could put the collar on. Then we had to keep a collar on her all the time until it healed up to keep her from biting the sore. It itched when it was healing.

About April 30 we were ready to start farming (a whole month late). We didn't have any feed of any kind to feed our horses. All they got to eat was what they got in the pasture. We unharnessed them at noon and turned them in the pasture for two hours to eat. We hitched them to the

disc, and went out and disced a half day. Came in with the bronco dragging one front foot. I had sweenied her.[7] I went to the phone and called a neighbor and told him I had sweenied one of the colts, and asked him what to do. He said, to get my turpentine bottle and a corn cob and then take a rope through her halter and around a post so I could let her loose quick. Then pore the turpentine on her shoulder and take the cob and rub it as hard as I could. If I done a good job of it she would come right out of it and be all right to go on and work. When the turpentine started to burn I had to let her loose. She would run a few feet then lay down and roll. She was trying to get rid of that burning.

In the morning my neighbor came down to see how the colt was. He said, you sure done a good job on that colt's shoulder. I sure was scared when I saw I had sweenied the colt for I had to have her to work or I couldn't put the crop in. I knew I couldn't work a sweenied horse. I disced 30 acres of the sod, the other 70 acres was to go back sod and it wasn't quite so much like a plank.

Henry writes that Dora can get a job at housework at the same place he is working at $3.50 a week. So the 10th of May I sent her back there to Nebraska. When everything was up and growing nice Mother wanted to help. She went out to hoe the potatoes. She was so pleased that I had planted potatoes. But she couldn't see good and couldn't tell the weeds from the potatoes. She was hoeing the potatoes off. I didn't like to tell her she couldn't hoe in the garden for she thought she was helping me a lot.

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[7]Sweenie or sweenied is a term used to explain that the horse's shoulder had been sprained as a result of hard work. Mrs. Wieck's treatment prevented that shoulder from caving-in or giving way. Another common term of the period was list which was an abbreviation for lister, an implement used to furrow rows for planting.

She was 79 years old. So I went to a man that had lots of hogs and bought two of his little pigs for $5 for both of them. The man put them both in one sack. They tore a hole in the sack before I got home with them and one got out. I had to hold him in my arms and put my foot on the sack to keep the other one from getting out of the sack. Mother was in bed when I got home. She got up bright and early to see the pigs. She said, now we will have meat for next winter. By this time our cows had gained on their milk. I told mother she should pick all the weeds that the pigs could eat and I would give them all the milk they could drink. By the time John comes home they will be so big John won't scold me for buying them. You won't have time to hoe in the garden. You just see that the pigs have all the weeds they can eat. She sure done her best to feed the pigs. She had only a few steps to go to get all the weeds she could pull. She was happy helping me and I was happy to get her out of the garden.

I have been talking all this time like I was the only one that did any work around the place. Far from it. Everybody was doing their part. There was Walter and I working outside. We both had to go to the field until we taught the colts to turn on the ends of the fields. When we got them so I could handle them Walter had to make mangers in the barn and a 101 other things that was hard for me to do. I could sit on the seat and drive the horses. When Dora left, Rhoda 13 years, Esther (8), Alice, and Roy (3) took over the house work, cooking, baking bread, ironing, making beds, and everything. We had listed four acres of kaffer corn so we would have feed for the chickens and turkeys.

Everything was so dry that it didn't look like we were going to raise anything. The folks that had hired Riley brought him home. They said, it doesn't look like we are going to raise anything, so we can't pay him. The 16th of June I took Riley and Walter to town and sent them back to Nebraska. They both got jobs right away at $25 a month. I

and the four small children were alone. By this time the old cows were giving lots of milk, and we were churning enough butter to make our living. Rhoda had to do the churning. I still had seven acres of cain for feed to list and there was about three acres of the corn that was only about three inches tall and as yellow as a pumkin. I had to list that over, so I put that to cain. (I milked my six cows and separated; they didn't buy cream at that time so had to churn it). Took care of the horses, done our washing by hand on Sunday, and lathed the whole house (a couple of hours work). When Daddy came home had to go to town every Saturday to take the butter in before it got too old.

From the middle of June till the middle of July, I had to tend the corn. We had had a good rain and everything was growing good. So I took the weeder and went over the corn and throwed the dirt out to clean the weeds off of the edge of the ridges. Mother was standing out in her yard when I came in from the field. I said, now I am through with the corn; so in the morning I will start on the cain. (It was about three inches high.) Mother said, Oh, you can't go into that little cain with that big machine and four big horses. You will do yourself a big damage. I said, oh I have to get them big weeds on the edge of their ridge or we can't cut the cain. So in the morning I hitched up and started in the cain. When I got to the other end I turned around and looked back. There was mother standing on the end of the row. She stayed there till I got back to her. (She always called me Ellie.) She said, oh Ellie you can do better than John; so everything was okay by her. I had to go through the corn and feed again and throw the dirt back to the corn. We had an awful hard machine to change around to throw in. I asked my neighbor if he would help me to set the machine. He said he would help me if I could turn it around to throw out, for you had to tear the whole machine down and put the shovels on the opposite

sides from me. He was working just across the road from me. He got everything to going good. I finished up my field work in about two weeks.

The first of July, I wrote and asked John if I should sell one of the cows to the butcher for $35. He said, yes, if she is fat enough to butcher. So my neighbor came down and helped me load her in the wagon and I took her to the butcher. He wasn't home; so I had to unload her myself. I backed up to a bank and led her out. Took the money and paid it on the mortgage. Daddy and all the children sent all their wages home; only they kept ten cents out of each dollar for their spending money, so I could pay debts. We had worked out a system to handle the children's money. They sent home 90 cents of every dollar and we booked it as a dollar. Then we payed off some of our ten percent mortgages with it and gave them the ten percent. When they got to be 21 years old they had a nice little nest egg to draw on when they wanted to go to farming for themselves. When they were 18 years we gave everyone a heifer calf so everyone had a few head of cattle when they got married.

August 7, 1912, Daddy, Dora and Walter came and brought with them Clara the girl that I had promised to care for. I went to town and got them. I drove one old horse and a colt. John said, on, can you drive Flossie to town? Don't she get scared at everything. I said, no she goes along as good as one of the old horses now. (Our two oldest boys Henry and Riley went north following the harvest up into the Dakotas, and stayed up there and worked until November.) When we got within a quarter of a mile of the house Daddy said, let me off for I want to look at the corn and feed. When he got through looking at everything he came to the house and said, you have a 1000 bushels of corn and feed enough to feed all the stock for three years. Who's calves are them in the little pasture? I said, they are ours. He said, my they have grown, I didn't know them. Where are the pigs that you bought? I said out in the barn. Mother

said; go look at them. They are not so little anymore. I fed them lots of weeds and Ellie gave them all the milk they could drink. We will have meat this winter, and Ellie has plenty corn to make them fat. They weighed about 75 or 80 pounds when he came home. Mother said we have all the potatoes we wanted to eat ever since the 4th of July out of our own garden.

The day after John came home the butcher came to get another beef to butcher. We sold him another cow for $40 and pay that on the mortgage. That left us with 20 head of cattle, and only a $145 mortgage against them.

In the middle of October with the harvest over in Dakota Henry and Riley came home. Now the house had to be plastered. So we hired a man to do the plastering while Dad and the boys mixed the plaster and carryed it to him. He got it all done in less than a week. Daddy and Walter dug the potatoes, which was 60 bushels, off of the two bushels we planted, and carryed them all down into the cellar. Now everybody is home again. The house is about plastered; potatoes dug and in the cellar. Kaffer corn tops about 150 bushels; feed is cut and in the shack to dry so we could stack it; five children in school. Daddy and Henry started picking corn. They want to get it out by the first of December. Riley and I finish the inside of the house; putting the caseings around the doors and windows; mopping boards; hanging the petition doors; building in cupboards. We finished the girls room first. There was the mop boards, two windows, and a door to put casing around and the door to hang. Then the girls mopped and cleaned the room and moved their three beds in. We went to work on the boys room. Mop board, two windows, three doors to case, and two doors to hang. The girls mopped and cleaned that room and moved two big beds and a crib bed in. Now the stairway mop boards, two doors to case and hang. That done we went to our bedroom. Two windows and three doors to case and hang, The girls mopped and cleaned our

bedroom, moved our bed in and a dresser and chair. Now that we had all our beds in place it began to seem like living and keeping house once again. We went to work on the 7 x 12 closet. Mop boards, one window, two doors to case, one to hang, great long rows of hooks to hang clothes on, six wide shelves six foot long for a linen closet, and a five foot clothes horse on wheels with hooks on both sides to hang clothes on in the middle of the closet. Now we had a place to put our clothing away, and close the doors so we could keep the house warm. Now to the kitchen. Mop boards, two windows and three doors to case, one door to hang, and a lot of cupboards to build in with a 100 pound flour bin as we used lots of flour. A 50 pound sack of flour just made three bakings of bread, 16 big loaves at a time. One of those cupboards opened into the dining room. We moved into the kitchen a home comfort range, a kitchen cabinet and a table. Now to the living room. Mop boards, two windows, two doors, the double doors to case, and hang. Now at last the dining room. Mop boards, two windows, two doors, the double doors to case, one door to hang, and a big cupboard to build under the high end of the stairway in the dining room. The house all finished and everybody in his or her little corner.

Spring of 1913 is here. Henry and Rily both went down to the Republican River to work for some farmers. Dora went down west of Goodland to work for an invalid lady. Daddy and Walter went to planting our crop. The rest of us planted a good sized garden and hung window shades and put up curtains to make our house look more like a home. On May 20, 1913, I went over to a neighbor and ushered Ralph Willard into their home. Daddy and Walter had to fence the garden to keep the chickens out. They broke out some more pasture so we would have more farm ground and moved the pasture fence back. Now we only have 100 acres in the pasture. Everything is up and growing good. So Daddy and the three big boys all went back to Nebraska to help his brother harvest. Their harvest is earlier than

ours. I tended the corn. When I was out in the field one of my neighbors came over and said, our party is coming off so you will have to come down. I said, alright you go on back home, I'll be down right away. I unhitched from the machine and hitched to the wagon. Went in the house, cleaned up, put on my white dress, went down and ushered Edna Ovila S. into their home. This was June the 30th 1913. Went back to my corn cultivating.

This fall we rented 80 acres of farm ground and planted it to wheat and also our sod. Daddy and the boys came back home and gathered in the crop, and got ready for winter. Now Henry is 22 years old and he has got himself four head of work horses. He took over the 80 acres that we farmed and put part of it to wheat and the rest in corn in 1914.

The Wieck family in 1927 in the living room of the block house, built 1911-1913. Front row, left to right: Alice Alfreida Wieck; Nancy Ellen Wieck; John Jacob Wieck; Roy Raymond Wieck; Back row, left to right: Joseph Walter Wieck; Lena Esther Wieck; Clara Ellen Brockman (John Wieck's niece, she lived with the family for six years); Rhoda Eliza Wieck; Doretha Margaretha Wieck; William Riley Wieck.